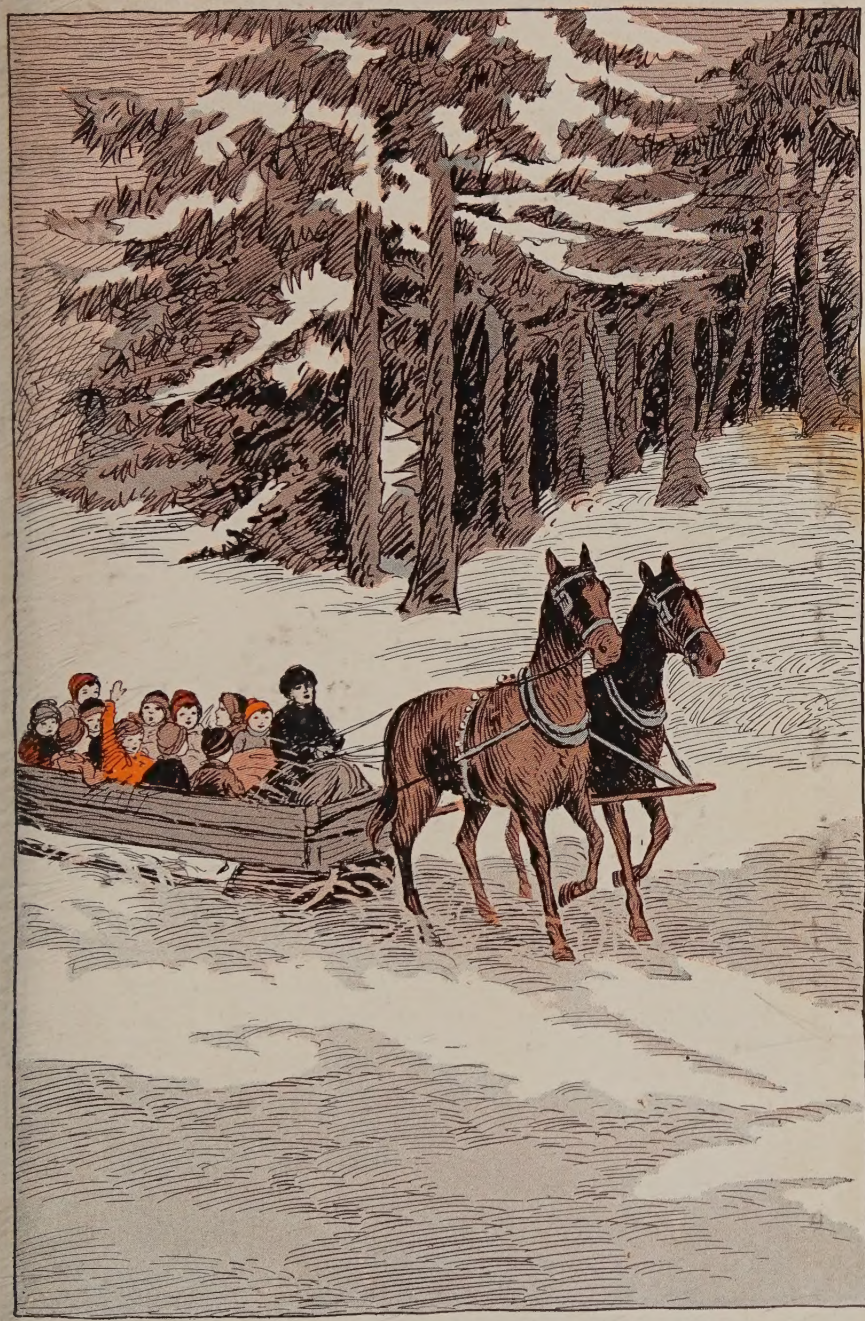
HOLIDAYS *on the* RANCH

E. J. Craine

The very tallest evergreen growing near the house was decorated.



Amid the merry jingle of sleigh bells, they started down the ranch road for home.

Bertena Dodge
from Mother

HOLIDAYS ON THE RANCH

Points West Series

By

E. J. CRAINE

LIBBY LOU

AT UNCLE FRED'S RANCH

WOOLLY WEST

HOLIDAYS ON THE RANCH

TENDERFOOT RANCHERS

LITTLE MOON

POINTS WEST SERIES

Holidays On the Ranch

By E. J. CRAINE

ILLUSTRATED

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Holidays On the Ranch

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HOLIDAYS ON THE RANCH

CHAPTER I

THE CATTLE SHOW

"Poof! Poof!" said the wind and he caught a lesson paper from Libby-Lou's table, tossed it into the air, whirled it around and around, carried it over the edge of the veranda, across the bed of tall cosmos, then up, up, into the branches of a maple tree that was busy changing its green dress to one of yellow and scarlet.

"Oh, Kenneth, it's my arithmetic all finished," Libby-Lou wailed.

The tree heard her so it promptly caught the truant and held it fast. Just then the breeze decided that catching papers was great fun, so it started to pick up three more.

"Hi," Kenneth protested and quickly piled books over the loose sheets. "I'll get a rake and see if I can get that one down."

He ran to the shed where the garden tools were kept and in a moment hurried back with the longest handled rake. He was just able to dislodge the paper and it fluttered to Libby-Lou's feet.

"Oh, thank you," Libby-Lou giggled rescuing her work.

"Hope is isn't torn," Kenneth said.

"It's all right," Libby-Lou assured him.

"What is this, recess?" Daddy asked coming around the veranda.

"My numbers went sailing away," Libby-Lou explained.

"That must mean that it is time for a little rest," Daddy chuckled. "Just look up the canyon."

The children lost no time in accepting the invitation and saw something that made them gasp in wonder. Down between the two rugged sides of the canyon, a mist was racing. It was almost as thick as a cloud, and while they watched it, the southern side was completely covered and looked as if there were no mountains there at all.

"It looks like a rain," Libby-Lou said in a puzzled tone because she didn't know how that could be.

"That's exactly what it is," Daddy told her.

"But the sun is shining here in the valley."

"I think it will not be shining long," Mummy remarked because she had come out to see the strange spectacle of an approaching storm.

Sure enough, the clouds began to gather and they could see the rain coming, like a magic wall that was running. Swiftly it came closer and closer, until the sun was hidden, the drops began to patter noisily on the leaves and the roofs, and the wind tried again to frolic with the papers.

"Better bring your lessons inside before they get drenched," Daddy suggested. The two children gathered up their work, tipped the tables with tops to the wall, and slid their books in through the window.

"Honk, honk, honk," the automobile horn sounded, the limousine rushed up the ranch road and popped under the porte-cochere.

"We raced the storm," Aunt Margaret laughed.

"It got here first," Libby-Lou declared.

"But it didn't catch us. I hope it keeps up a couple of days," Uncle Fred remarked.

"Does the land need it?" Kenneth asked, because he didn't care for rainy days.

"No, but if it pours now, it will clear up for the cattle show next week."

Right away the children were interested. "When is it? Where is it? What is it?" they wanted to know.

Uncle Fred took a big folded poster out of his pocket and spread it out so they could read the official announcement of the annual Cattle Show to be held by The Four Counties. There was a long list of prizes offered for exhibitions, races, riding stunts, and fancy dress parade.

"Is it a circus?" Libby-Lou wanted to know.

"It's a cross between a picnic, circus and rodeo," Uncle Fred said.

"Wish I could get one of those prizes," Kenneth remarked although he had no idea of entering any of the contests.

"Persuade your aunt to let you ride Blue Stockings in the boys' race."

"Cracky, think I could?" Kenneth hesitated.

"You might if you spend the rest of the time learning to handle my horse," Aunt Margaret agreed.

"Could Mex win a prize?" Libby-Lou thought her pony quite the finest bit of horseflesh in the land.

"He might if his rider was sufficiently dressed up for the parade," Uncle Fred chuckled.

"White Cloud could walk away with some of those awards," Kenneth declared positively.

"We'll ask Little-Moon if she wants to try," Uncle Fred answered.

"I wish the Millers could win some prizes," Libby-Lou ventured.

"Perhaps they can. I never tasted better jelly and cookies than Mrs. Miller makes," Aunt Margaret answered, then added. "My guess is that this rain is almost over and if you are going to ride Blue Stockings, you better finish lessons and start as soon as you can."

"I sure will," Kenneth laughed and went for his books. Libby-Lou flew to hers, because she wanted to watch her brother.

In less than an hour the sun had driven the clouds away, the work was finished, recited to Daddy, and then Chuck, the chore boy, came to the veranda leading the beautiful roan. Aunt Margaret came out to help

the horse and boy get acquainted. Every morning and afternoon, until two days before the Cattle Show opened, the two practiced for the grand prize. Kenneth was as happy as a king over the progress he had made, and Blue Stockings, who seemed to understand what was expected of him, was doing splendidly.

The entrances had been made, including Mrs. Miller's jelly and cookies, Little-Moon was to ride in the go-as-you-please race and White Cloud was also entered for the bucking contest. Every child in the Four Counties who had a horse, was to be in the big parade. The little Indian was in it too, and was to wear her native dress. Neva, was going on Patches, had a Brownie suit Mummy made for her, and Libby-Lou was to represent a yellow tulip. Dorothy Mason called up and said she was going to be Red Riding Hood.

Dick, who was Uncle Fred's foreman, took the stock to the fairgrounds' stable two days early, so everything could be groomed spick and span for the occasion. Kenneth went along to practice on the race course and camp out. After he was gone Uncle Fred chuckled.

"This place is certainly quiet. I miss the holler days."

"Never mind, winter is full of holler days," Aunt Margaret laughed.

"And holidays will be holler days," Daddy warned them.

"Are there any holidays this month?" Libby-Lou asked.

"No, Little Person. This is the thirtieth day of September. Tomorrow will be the first of October, Oct., for short, and it has Hallowe'en at the end," Uncle Fred answered.

"What is that?" Libby-Lou wanted to know.

"We'll tell you when it comes. Now, we are going to enjoy peace and quiet. If your brother carries off that prize his lungs will be stronger than ever."

"Perhaps he will yell himself out at the show," Mummy suggested.

"No fear," Daddy insisted. "Tomorrow is show day and this is bed time."

"I'm going," Libby-Lou giggled. She bade the family goodnight, said "pleasant dreams" to Flyer, her yellow kitten, and to Garwin, the big police dog who was her special pal.

The weather the next day was beautiful and almost everybody on the ranch was going to the show. The family went in the big limousine, the Millers and Farrahs went in the ranch runabout, and the men who did not go early on horseback, went in the big truck, which looked very festive in gay decorations. It took an hour and a half to make the trip to the fair grounds, which was a huge enclosure, ever so much bigger than a circus, and decorated from one end to the other with festoons of colored tapes, long chains of evergreen, flags and streamers.

"Oh, how nice it looks," Libby-Lou exclaimed as they drove through the wide gate. She had not seen so many people since she came to Points West, and she had almost forgotten there were so many in the world.

"Hello, Libby-Lou," Dorothy called. "Daddy's taking me to see the animals. Want to come?"

"I'd like to," Libby-Lou grinned, so she joined their little neighbor and walked slowly through the part where the long cattle sheds were built.

There was all kinds of stock, big ones and little ones. A good many of them wore ribbons; blue, red or white for first second or

third prizes. A lovely jersey calf proudly bore a blue ribbon around her neck and an inky black colt had one tied to his halter. Then they went to the poultry exhibit and found that Uncle Fred's section held a lot of prize winning chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. He had a special little pen in which were six beautiful wild geese, and Libby-Lou giggled happily because she remembered the day Uncle Fred came home carrying in his hat nine goose eggs he had found abandoned in a nest by the river. She had seen the eggs in the huge incubator, and later got acquainted with the six little goslins who looked as if they had toothache.

From the poultry section they went to the biggest tent where the very first thing she saw was a pumpkin as big as a round wash tub. There were potatoes a foot and a half long, gourds of all shapes, whopper winter squashes, long tables of fruit, the biggest apples she ever saw. Beyond that was the honey from the ranch, the women's and girls' exhibits, sewing and cooking. Mrs. Miller's jelly carried off first prize, so did her cookies. Mrs. Mason had baked the best pie and Mrs. Farrah's flowers had a place of honor.

"Hello, Libby-Lou, isn't it great? Mex has had a manicure, a bob and is all dressed for the parade, you better hustle," Kenneth who had been looking for his small sister, called the instant he spied her.

"The parade is at eleven, so you two better hustle and get ready," Mr. Mason laughed as he glanced at his watch. He took them to where the grown-ups were waiting to help them and then began a bustling time.

"I say, you look great," Kenneth greeted them when they came out of the tent. Uncle Fred took the little folk to the stables where their mounts were stomping impatiently.

Mex greeted his small mistress with a glad nicker, White Cloud pressed his nose lovingly against Little-Moon, who looked a lot as she did that day the tall Indian Interpreter brought her to the ranch, and Patches almost jerked away from the boy who was holding him.

"It's me," Neva assured him as she petted his slick coat.

"All ready for the parade of the children of Four Counties," a man shouted through a megaphone.

Quickly the horses were led out, the children helped to the saddles, if they happened

to have any, and then they walked over to the lineup point. Libby-Lou saw a crowd of people on the grandstand and more standing by the fence all the way around the oval track. The names of the children and the horses were written on a blackboard, and each rider was given a number.

How excited they all were and how they all giggled, but they sobered up when the man called again through the megaphone.

"Time."

They gathered up the reins, and everybody got out of the way as the parade started in gorgeous style. It wasn't to be a race, but at the end the ponies might run if they wanted to. Across the line they stepped, White Cloud a bit ahead, because he wanted to hurry, but he quickly understood what Little-Moon expected of him so he paced like the thoroughbred he was, bearing an American Princess.

"Rah, rah, rah. Hurrah for that white boy, he's the prize, he's the prize, rah for the little girl," the crowd cheered lustily.

"He's first prize, he's first prize," someone started and immediately he was cheered to the skies and nobody objected.

There was a little boy in the parade, who

rode a mule, and the mule would stop every few yards and kick with his hind feet. That set the crowd to laughing heartily. Neva was riding just behind, and Patches decided those hoofs were coming too close, so he edged up and gave the mule a nip in the flanks. That set the crowd to laughing harder than ever, because they thought the two children were together and did it on purpose.

"Rah, rah, rah, for the spotted pony and the mule. They get the biggest laugh, give them a prize, give them a prize."

Then came Dorothy Mason, she was cheered for a prize, and she did look as if she stepped out of the story book. When the ponies got all the way around, each little girl was given a box of candy and they were just as happy as they could possibly be.

"What's Neva's prize?" Libby-Lou whispered to Kenneth who had come to the track.

"I think it's a saddle," Kenneth told her, and Libby-Lou smiled all over, because she was so pleased. She knew that Neva and Patches would both be glad, and they were.

CHAPTER II.

HALLOWE'EN

"I HOPE you people will find places near us for lunch," Mrs. Mason said to Aunt Margaret. "If we go now we shall not miss any of the afternoon program."

"Thank you, I am sure we are all glad to. Congratulations on your small daughter."

"It's nice you got a prize," Libby-Lou told Dorothy.

"Boy is a grand pony, he always wins a prize. I'm glad Neva and Little-Moon got prizes," Dorothy answered.

"So am I. Neva wouldn't let anyone take Patches to the stable, and Little-Moon went along with White Cloud because he's in the race this afternoon," Libby-Lou chatted as they went to the big tent where milk, rolls, sandwiches, cake, and most anything anyone wanted to eat was for sale.

The Masons, Kerwoods and Stewarts found one end of a long table and later the Farrahs and the Millers joined them. Neva

was almost too overjoyed to eat, and Little-Moon's table manners were quite as correct as Monzella's. She had learned very fast, could speak a little French as well as English, but she was the same quiet little girl Libby-Lou met early in the summer, and no one could help loving her.

Three o'clock was the time set for the boys' race, and everybody was back at the grandstand when the pistol cracked for the start. When Blue Stockings leaped away, everyone from the Stewart ranch was up and shouting lustily, and Libby-Lou leaned so far over the rail that Uncle Fred caught her coat to keep her from tumbling.

"Kenneth's ahead, he's ahead," she shouted just as if everybody didn't know it. And Blue Stockings kept ahead, all the way around the course, although there were three other fine horses, and two of them gave Kenneth cause of anxiety. He was flushed and happy when the crowd cheered as they dashed over the line.

"Isn't he simply great, Aunt Margaret!" the boy shouted exactly as if he hadn't uttered a single yell in days.

"We think so, and his rider isn't so bad,"

she laughed as she came to pet the pony before he was led away.

Then came the go-as-you-please-race in which White Cloud was entered and when he came to the starting line the folks saw that Little-Moon had discarded the saddle, riding only with a rope.

"Crack!" went the pistol. To Libby-Lou's dismay White Cloud backed, instead of leaping forward, and the leading horse was almost a quarter of the way around the track before the small rider got her pony started. Then he did make up for the lost time. He fairly flew. He reached the last horse and went past him like a streak, on to the next, and past, past the next, on, on, on he raced and for the first time that day there was hardly a sound from the crowd.

"Look at that white boy go!" someone shouted.

"Zowie, at-a-boy, eat 'em up," roared another, then everybody was yelling. The riders of the two leading horses glanced over their shoulders, and then began to urge their ponies to greater effort.

Three-quarters of the way around there were four horses ahead of White Cloud. A nod and he was neck and neck with the last

one, a spring and he reached the third, another leap and only two horses were between him and winning. The crowd saw the little girl on his back caress his neck, saw the horse respond and race harder than ever, his feet seemed not to touch the ground. He was almost to the head of the second horse, whose rider was yelling and lashing his whip, but White Cloud gained, gained, his nose was at the shoulder of the leading horse, a leap, a spring, they were nose to nose. Another splendid effort and he reached the goal, half a head the winner. The crowd nearly went wild as they poured over the rail to get near the beautiful fellow. Little-Moon slipped off his back, Dick hurried the horse to the stable for a good rub down.

After that came roping contests, foot races, handicap races, and the last thing for the day was the bucking ponies.

Four horses were brought in and after ridding themselves of two or three riders, each was conquered, then White Cloud came out again, this time Dick had him in charge. The cowboys thought it was some kind of joke, this bringing a horse that a child could manage so easily, into a bucking contest.

"Prize goes to the man who sticks on two minutes," yelled the announcer as the pony was brought through the gate.

A cowboy laughingly leaped to the saddle and was out of it almost the same instant. Never was a man more surprised. Then another tried, and at last the champion rider of Four Counties was urged to try. White Cloud did all the stunts known to great buckers, only he had a way of his own. He proceeded to whirl, sun-fish, and pitch like a white thunder cloud of lashing hoofs. Out of the saddle went the famous rider. He sprawled on the ground and sat looking at the horse.

"My hat's off to you, old timer," he grinned good-naturedly and the crowd laughed with him, no one else wanted to try.

Then Little-Moon hurried to her pony and made him shake hands with the man he had just thrown. "Want to sell him?" the cowboy demanded.

"Oh, no," Little-Moon answered positively.

"Don't blame you. He sure has some extras in the way of jumps," he said with feeling.

After the prize was awarded, the little

Indian girl led her pony away. A band was beginning to play from a platform that had been erected for dancing, and then, as the evenings were getting short, the strings of lights and lanterns were turned on, making the fairgrounds look even more like a carnival than ever.

"I am thinking our young people have had enough excitement for one day," Uncle Fred announced.

"I agree with you," Mummy added, so the car was brought up, but Mrs. Mason, who wasn't ready to start, came to speak to them.

"It is early for invitations, but I am planning a Witches' Night party and I hope you all come," she told Aunt Margaret.

"Thank you, we shall be delighted."

Libby-Lou was too sleepy to ask about it then, but the next morning at breakfast she remembered.

"What is a Witches' Night?" she wanted to know.

"Hallowe'en. It comes the very last day of this month," Kenneth told her.

"It's another holler day and we are going to a party," she giggled.

"Oh, Libby-Lou, all days are holler days

at Points West," he laughed and rumpled her hair.

But there was a great deal of mystery connected with this holiday, and as the days passed, Libby-Lou, Neva, Monzella and Little-Moon were more and more puzzled about what was going to happen. Each little girl had a special frock, and no one except her Mummy knew what kind of frock it was, no one but Aunt Margaret knew what Little-Moon's frock was, and, my goodness, what a lot of secret sessions there were while things were being fitted, and what a lot of giggling. They kept their secrets mighty well, then all of a sudden they discovered that Kenneth had a secret, too, and was quite as mysterious as the rest of them. After that they discovered that the grown-ups all had secrets.

"Everybody is going to be dressed up," Libby-Lou guessed and the three pals agreed that was right and it must be a wonderful party.

"The brilliant October, Oct. for short, days came and went. The gorgeous dress of the maples, birch, and fruit trees grew dry and rustly, and every day more and more of them fluttered like gay butterflies

through the air and piled on the ground. Only the evergreens kept their color, but they dropped their dried needles until they covered the ground like a slippery carpet.

"This is the thirty-first, Libby-Lou," Kenneth grinned as he tore off a page of the daily calendar.

"Witches' Night, I know it," she giggled and when she and Neva took a ride on Mex and Patches they could talk of nothing else, and the ponies trotted along as if they expected something amazing to happen.

Right after dinner the three families started for the Masons' ranch, and although it wasn't very late it was good and dark. When the cars drew up before the house the guests saw a bright pumpkin lantern grinning mysteriously from over the door. Just as soon as they stepped onto the porch, the door opened and a tall figure stood silently in the hall, which was lighted with more pumpkin lanterns. The figure pointed up the stairs, and how they all squealed as they went to the bedrooms where extra wraps were to be left. Then another still, white figure, which had a long shiny bone in its hand, pointed downstairs and the children wanted to run.

"It's only play, Libby-Lou," Kenneth whispered and that chased away his sister's scared feeling.

They were escorted to the barn, but they stopped part way to put on masks, then they went on into the huge barn, which was decorated from top to bottom with branches of witches and black cats, and dried maple leaves. The ladies were shown into a small harness room, where coats were slipped off, and when they came out, one by one, no one could tell who they were. Libby-Lou thought how pretty and jolly it all was and she looked around for some of her own folks. She caught her breath sharply because she couldn't find them. At the end of the barn there was a high platform and three violinists were perched on log seats. They began to play and one of them beat time with his foot. Finally he shouted at the top of his voice.

"Get your partners for the grand march."

The men hustled about among the ladies, nobody spoke a word, but when the gentleman offered his arm, the lady accepted with a bow, and Libby-Lou had to giggle.

"Everybody in the grand march," the

fiddler shouted again. Then a very tall man, who wore a black velvet suit and a pointed cap, stepped up to Libby-Lou, bowed ever so low and offered his arm.

She was just a little bit frightened at first, but she remembered that it was a party, so she put her hand on his arm and presently they were marching in the parade. There were forty couples, counting the children, and a man who was master of ceremony guided them through a lot of figures that made Libby-Lou think of the folk dances in the Park at home. She tried very hard to pick out Mummy and Aunt Margaret, and although she saw lots of eyes that smiled at her, she couldn't guess to which one she belonged. That gave her a little catchy feeling in her throat, but just then her partner forgot to be formal, and took her hand in his. She almost squealed with happiness because she knew that was Uncle Fred, and she gave his fingers a squeeze.

"All join hands and circle around the hall." While they were doing that it made so much fun that lots of them had to laugh, but none said a word, not one.

"Face the lady on your left and waltz," was the next call, and Libby-Lou found her-

self dancing with a boy about Kenneth's age, but she was sure it wasn't her brother.

"To your seats."

The music stopped and they all sat down, then two men dragged two huge iron kettles, suspended from tripods, to the middle of the floor. They stirred mysteriously for a while, and made a queer noise, like a cat growling, then they poured out glasses of the stuff and passed it around. How everybody laughed when they discovered that one had cider and one lemonade.

Then there was a Virginia Reel and everybody stomped and giggled, and when one man, who wore a jester suit, caught Libby-Lou and swung her around, she giggled softly. "Daddy." He gave her a little hug, then passed her over to a Spanish lady, and quickly she looked up because she knew that loved clasp. "Mummy," she said.

The next dance was a minuet, which was slow and beautiful, and Libby-Lou was sure the little girl opposite her, who wore a fairy dress, was Monzella. Then she thought she recognized Dorothy Mason, but that little girl whispered "Libby-Lou," and she knew it was Neva.

They rested again and then danced some

old-fashioned square dances, and finally the announcer had all the ladies lined up on one side of the room and all the gentlemen on the other.

"Unmask," he shouted.

Off came the masks and then followed such a chatter. Libby-Lou saw that Dorothy was wearing a witch's dress, Kenneth had a full cowboy suit, Aunt Margaret was a gypsy and Mr. Mason an Indian. There were so many jolly ones that Libby-Lou was sure she could never remember all of them.

After that the younger set sat and watched the older folk dance, and how funny it looked to see an Indian dancing with Old Mother Hubbard, and a Japanese boy dancing with a cowgirl. They decided that a Hallowe'en party was the most fun in all the world, and Libby-Lou wished she was grown up so she could stay awake to the very end, but she couldn't, neither could any of her playmates, so they were carried to the house and tucked into bed, and some of them did not wake up until the next morning, then they wondered if it wasn't all a jolly dream, but it wasn't, it was real as real.

CHAPTER III

THANKSGIVING

"Oh, oh, Neva, look! It's snowing." Libby-Lou shouted gleefully, and the soft white flakes fell on her coat sleeve.

"I better get Bobby inside," Neva said quickly, because two flakes fell on her hand and she feared the baby, who was having a jolly time in the play-coop his father had built for him, might get wet. But Bobby had other ideas on the subject and yelled so lustily when his sister started to carry him to the house, that their mother came hurrying to the door.

"What is the matter?" she wanted to know.

"It's snowing," Libby-Lou answered.

"My, my, I thought the child was hurt. The girls have been giving you a good time and you must come in now. There, there, you haven't a thing to cry about," she soothed as she took the little fellow in her

arms, but he pointed an accusing finger at his sister.

"I'll come in and play with you," she promised.

"You better ride Libby-Lou back to the ranch house," Mrs. Miller told them, because the two children had come over on Patches.

"Thank you, but I'd like to walk home through the snow. I've walked before and it's nice," Libby-Lou said quickly.

"Do you, really?" Neva was anxious about Bobby, who was still crying and she knew her mother had a lot to do.

"Really, I do want to walk," Libby-Lou insisted. "Goodbye, goodbye, Bobby," she waved her hand, and the baby smiled through his tears.

She started along the ranch road, through the strip of timber that surrounded the Miller cabin, down a little hill and up another. By that time the air was full of snow flakes and they were such big ones that they had already covered the unprotected parts of the ground with a thin layer, and they were beginning to decorate the trees with glistening crystals. The little girl had on her overshoes, because it was cold, and now

she skipped along, but not too fast, for the snow to sprinkle her coat and cap. She laughed as she went and almost every step the covering on the ground grew thicker. Then she stopped on a hill to look around, but the atmosphere was so heavy that the mountains were completely hidden. It looked as if there couldn't possibly be a branch of the great Rocky Mountains anywhere. As far as she could see the snow was tumbling and tossing as if it were having a wonderful time.

"How still you are," she said softly, then she added, "I guess you like to be let out to play just as much as I do." She laughed again and hurried on, because it was a mile to the house.

All the way the snow was getting deeper and deeper until, when at last she caught sight of the barn, it was up to the tops of her overshoes, but she wore leggins, so it did not matter.

"Good gracious, what little snowbird is this?" Uncle Fred came out of the stable just in time to meet her. "Where did you come from, I should like to know?"

"From Neva's. I walked," she told him.

"That's amazing. Where did you get

those rosy cheeks? Are you a rose-bud caught in the storm?"

"Guess I got them coming through the woods, Uncle Fred. It's lovely, just lovely. The snowflakes are as pretty as can be, I watched them when my coat wasn't so covered, and they are the nicest shapes," she said as they walked along.

"Did you know, Little Person, that every snowflake is different?" He caught some on his sleeve, then took a small magnifying glass from his pocket. "Take a look."

"Oh, they are nice as nice," Libby-Lou exclaimed.

"I'll tell you something else about them. This snow, some of it, will go into the ground, and up in the mountains it stores itself away until spring, then comes down in our creeks and irrigating ditches. Then the sun draws some back and it makes rain, and then when it's cold again, it is snow."

"Oh, my, isn't it as busy as busy?" she said in surprise.

"Everything is as busy as busy, Little Person. That reminds me, I am going to give you something very important to do every day."

"What is it?" she asked eagerly.

"There is a covered box in Cook's shed. Every day she and the bunkhouse cook save scraps of fat and bone. They put them on a plate and every day you must get the two piles and put them in the box. Soon this snow will be so deep my bird friends will not be able to find much to eat and we'll tie the scraps in places they can find. It helps them keep strong and warm, and as they help us raise prize fruit, it isn't much for us to do to thank them," he explained.

"Shall I start right away?" she demanded.

"Right this minute, here's the box." He showed her where it was kept and the inside was clean and shiny.

"Cook, have you got some scraps now?" Libby-Lou called.

"That I have, right here," Cook chuckled and Libby-Lou emptied the plate then ran to the bunkhouse.

"Where do you keep the bones and fat?" she wanted to know.

"Now then, I just cracked some bones for the bird feast, here they are," and he gave her a heaping tin plate full. She emptied that too, returned the plate, then ran into the house.

"Daddy—Mummy, it's snowing and all the flakes are different. Uncle Fred showed me and he gave me important work to do every day," she shouted almost as loud as her brother would.

"You look like a snow girl," Daddy told her.

"When the snow gets deeper, I'll build you a fine snow house, a real igloo, that's what the house the Eskimo live in is called. I'll make it to last all winter," Kenneth promised.

"That will be fun. Can we play in it?"

"It will last a long time because this is only November, the beginning of winter."

"Libby-Lou glanced at the calendar. "November, that's Nov., for short, and Thanksgiving day is in it, almost at the end. Then, when she got her wraps off she remembered about how things are done in New York. "Don't you take the snow away, Uncle Fred?"

"No indeed, Little Person, we are glad to see it and we couldn't possibly take it away because there will be so much of it," he laughed.

The next morning the snow was deep, and still falling, so Libby-Lou couldn't go

out to play. Inside the fireplaces were all lighted and the house was cheery and cozy, but she liked sitting at the window watching the white stuff coming down, only now the flakes were tiny, a bit hard, and the wind was blowing. The men were shoveling paths about the places they had to go, and the evergreen forests looked exactly as if each tree were dressed up for Christmas. Even the bare branches of the maples, birch and fruit trees were covered with thick layers. There were a lot of fat and bones in the birds' box, but Dick and Cal put it out for the feathery friends and Libby-Lou watched them as they fluttered about pecking at their breakfast, dinner, or supper, whichever it happened to be.

The first clear day the children raced out with a shout and true to his promise, Kenneth marked off a space and started the igloo. That first day he got so much done that it looked as if it certainly was going to make a jolly play-place. One afternoon Mrs. Miller came over to see Aunt Margaret.

"Our cabin isn't very big, Mrs. Stewart, but I guess it is kind of like the homes those first Americans had, and I thought it would be nice to have a Thanksgiving dinner there,

if you and the Farrahs and the Masons will be so good as to come."

"I think it is a splendid idea, Mrs. Miller, that is if you will let us help with the preparations," Aunt Margaret accepted heartily.

"The Masons did give us a nice party. My Neva will never get over talking about it."

"It will be perfectly wonderful," Aunt Margaret enthused, so Mrs. Miller went home happy and the children were as excited as could be over the prospects of having a Thanksgiving dinner in a log cabin just as the first settlers did so long ago.

"Just think, Lib-Lou, there were not so many people in all the country as are at Points West," Kenneth told his sister.

"Not in New York?" Libby-Lou could hardly believe it.

"Not any place," he assured her and he marked a tiny opening in the igloo he was building.

"Thought you children would like to try your skill with these," it was Cal and he carried two pairs of the queerest looking things. Libby-Lou wondered if they were for tennis. "I just finished making them."

"What are they for?" she demanded.

"Snowshoes, the kind the Indians use," Kenneth laughed and he threw down his shovel. "Cracky, you were great to make them for us, thanks a lot."

"I haven't time to teach you how to use them, but I'll show you how to put them on and you can teach yourselves," Cal told them.

It did not take long to get the things adjusted and the two children had a good laugh at their own comical appearance. Cal went off and Kenneth took a few trial steps while Libby-Lou watched him, then she tried, but when she put the right foot down the left went on top of it, and when she got herself straightened out and put the left foot down, the right snowshoe went over it, so she did not make much progress. But after a number of trials, she lifted one foot and took a step forward, then the other and made another step.

"I'm doing it," she giggled and took more steps. But she had to keep her eyes on her feet, and suddenly the snowshoes bumped against a tree and down she went.

"You are doing fine," Kenneth roared as he came cautiously to help her, but he

stepped on a place that wasn't level and down he went.

"So are you doing fine," Libby-Lou laughed at him.

"Say, let's go over to the meadow where the snow isn't broken and there are no trees," he proposed.

"All right," Libby-Lou agreed. They took the snowshoes off and hurried along the paths until they came to the meadow, which was broad and flat, there they could make better progress.

"Ver' good," said a soft voice and the two looked up to see Little-Moon smiling at their efforts. She too was on snowshoes, but hers had been made by some Indians and she walked on them as unconcerned as if they were just rubbers.

"Show us," Libby-Lou begged, and with a nod the little Indian girl agreed. She walked around and around, her eyes ahead of her, like when one rides a bicycle, and finally the children thought they had the idea. Then they each took one of her hands and went shoving along at a great rate.

"Oh, it the best fun," Libby-Lou giggled.

"I'm going to wear mine to the Millers'

Thanksgiving. That will make it more old-fashioned," Kenneth declared.

"So am I," Libby-Lou added. "We will have to practice every day."

And every day they did practice, sometimes alone and sometimes with Little-Moon, so when Thanksgiving came around, they set out together, met Little-Moon where the branch road turned off, and then they turned into the forest and went forward at a great rate of speed.

"Come in," Mrs. Miller invited cordially. They left the snowshoes outside the door, and then went inside where all the rest of the guests were already assembled.

"Cracky, I say this looks nice," Kenneth declared.

The little log cabin was attractive. There were dozens of tall tallow candles for light, and the crackling fireplace added to the coziness. The Millers had rag rugs on the floor and the whole place looked as if it were dressed up for one of the pictures in the American History books.

Mrs. Miller had put three tables close together until they formed an L, and there was a red and white checked cloth, and more candlesticks. When the turkey was brought

in, and everybody was ready, they all stood a little way from their seats, bowed their heads, while Mr. Miller asked the blessing. He repeated one that had been given over three hundred years ago in a tiny New England home.

Then they took their places and although it was crowded, nobody minded that a bit, in fact, they laughed about it a great deal. One big difference between the dinner and the ones of long-ago, was that they did not have anything to fear. There were no savages who might be prowling about to attack them, and a small Indian girl was an honored guest and was having as good a time as anybody.

"We have lots to be thankful for," Daddy remarked.

"I'm thankful I'm at Points West," Libby-Lou spoke up.

"I'm thankful that we are here and my family has a good home and is comfortable," Mrs. Miller said softly. She was thinking of the summer when they were camping in the covered wagon and her husband was not well enough to get a job.

"I'm thankful for our wonderful land, that it has grown so fine and gives so many

people an opportunity to live happily," Aunt Margaret said.

"I'm thankful about the cabin, and Bobby, and Patches—and——" Neva stopped in confusion.

"There are so many things to be thankful for it's hard to say them off, Neva. When I get started that's just the way I feel," Uncle Fred helped her and she nodded.

"I am thankful we came to this land and my children can grow up strong and learn enough so they can be respected citizens," Louis Farrah told them softly.

"I, too, am thankful. And I am thankful that the war did not take my Louis," Mrs. Farrah said. There were tears in her eyes, because although her husband was only a young fellow, he went through the four awful years of war—fighting and fighting to save France.

"We have much to thank God for," Mr. Mason smiled. He was English and had been through the war, too.

"What did you do in the war on Thanksgiving?" Kenneth wanted to know.

"Neither England nor France have Thanksgiving day, as it is celebrated here, but when the American boys came over, I

met some of them. I remember a group from the West, fine jolly fellows, and it seemed kind of odd one day, to see them eat their meal in a dugout. They all told, just as we are, how much they were thankful for, and I was thankful they had come to help us. It would have taken years' more fighting if they had not," he smiled.

"Wish I had been grown up and could have gone over," Kenneth remarked regretfully.

"Plenty of great work you will have to do when you grow up," Mr. Farrah told him.

"Yes indeed, plenty," Uncle Fred chuckled.

When the meal was over, Daddy read a Thanksgiving story, and the little people toasted apples before the fire, and after that the small members of the party wanted to go out and play, so out they went.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTMAS

THE first of December, Dec. for short, followed right on the heels of Thanksgiving, and brought with it more snow so Libby-Lou and Kenneth were at the window watching the flakes pile up on the finished igloo outside.

"Here comes Mr. Farrah," Libby-Lou exclaimed. Sure enough the poultry man was running along the path and was in such a hurry that he had forgotten his coat. In a moment he was in the room and jerked off his cap and mittens.

"Meester Stewart," he began excitedly. "Little-Moon, she is gone."

"Gone?" Uncle Fred repeated.

"Where?" Libby-Lou demanded.

"That I not know," Louis declared with a shrug of his shoulders.

"What happened?" Uncle Fred asked quickly.

"She play with Monzella and Jean before

the snow fall. They come in, she stop to leave her snowshoes in the shed. My wife see her walk on the path, she turn to the oven, Little-Moon does not come in. We call, I look out. There are fresh track of horse, but no Little-Moon," he explained.

"We must see if we can locate her," Uncle Fred jumped up, got into his great coat and the two men hurried out. They met Daddy and Dick, who turned around and went with them, hurrying up the ranch road to the poultry man's cottage.

"Where do you suppose she went?" Libby-Lou asked Aunt Margaret, whose face was grave.

"I have no idea, my dear."

After that the children could think of nothing but the disappearance of the little Indian girl, and try to figure out what could have happened to her. Later, when it had stopped snowing, they went to join the search. All the men on the ranch were scattered about the woods and roads, trying to find a trace of the missing child. They followed the horse's tracks along the western edge of the ranch, but the fresh snow had finally covered them and there wasn't another thing to follow.

They had telephoned to all the neighboring ranchers, but no one had a suggestion, no one had seen a stranger, no one had seen Little-Moon, but everybody promised to be on the lookout for her. The agent at the Junction promised to ask the conductors on the trains to keep a watch along the route in case whoever might have Little-Moon should try to get out of the valley by way of the railroad.

Mr. Mason and some of his men came over to join in the search of the forests, everybody scanned the mountains and canyons for smoke, but they all agreed that in the laden air smoke could easily be hidden, and if a member of her own tribe had taken her, the Indian would know how to keep his whereabouts from being discovered.

Uncle Fred sent a message to the Agent at the Reservation, but because of the deep snow, it would take a man two days, even with skis, to reach there.

A week passed and no word came of Little-Moon, but by that time her pictures in Indian dress and that of a white child, were sent all over the state and into other states. Then a heavy automobile drove up

to the ranch house and out of it stepped Mr. Williams, the Agent.

"Any news?" he wanted to know the very first thing.

"None," Uncle Fred answered.

"She has not showed up at the Reservation. Has anyone been to see her from the tribe?"

"Not that anyone knows," Uncle Fred replied.

"Did any of them object to her being brought away for an education?" Daddy asked thoughtfully.

"No, and I made sure before I left, that they are all there. Some of them hunt during the winter, but not far from home. Know of anyone else who might be doing it out of revenge?"

"The only people who might have a grudge against the child are two tramps she put to rout with White Cloud. They were trying to kidnap the children, and Little-Moon tore into them. They are both safely in jail and have had no communications with anyone outside of the prison. I made sure of that," Uncle Fred explained.

"Did Little-Moon say she did not like living with the white people any time?" he

asked Libby-Lou, who promptly shook her head.

"She liked us and taught us a lot of things, and we taught her. We had good times together, all of us."

"She wanted to learn because the old queen, her grandmother, wanted her to. When she could talk more, she said that," Kenneth added.

"She can not have fallen, been hurt any place?"

"We have searched the place every inch. She was on the path near the house, and Mrs. Farrah missed her almost immediately," Aunt Margaret said positively.

"Well, it certainly is a mystery," the Agent declared as puzzled as could be. "I'll see what else we can do."

And it stayed a mystery. Although every day the children were out they searched for the beloved playmate, but never a trace did they find.

"It's almost Christmas and we have presents for her," Libby-Lou sobbed.

"She was making presents too," Monzella told them.

"We'll find her before Christmas," Neva said hopefully, but they didn't, and the

Agent, who had returned to the Reservation, sent word there was no news of her.

Christmas eve came and the children on the ranch, like children the world over, were eager and excited. There was to be a big dinner at the ranch house. Every home was spick and span, decorated with evergreen and bright ribbons; packages were wrapped for immediate friends and closets were full of packages that had come by mail or express. Outside, every tree was glistening with snow and crystals and nobody wanted to have one cut, because they looked so much nicer where they were growing.

Libby-Lou and even Kenneth went to bed early so they would be ready for the morrow. It was hard to go to sleep with so much excitement in the air, but the sandman attended to that and chased them off to dreamland.

"Merry Christmas," whispered Kenneth. He had tip-toed into Libby-Lou's room and shook her gently by the shoulder.

"Merry Christmas," she answered sleepily. "Why, it's still dark."

"I know it, but I heard something outside, in front of the house. Hop up and into some clothes. Be real still and we'll see

what it is," Kenneth whispered again and he switched on one of the small lights.

"Is it morning?" Libby-Lou wanted to know as she hustled into her clothes.

"Almost. Here's your fur coat, that'll keep you warm, and your cap. Hustle, Lib," he urged.

"Where are we going?"

"Just out on your balcony," he answered.

Presently they went, quiet as a couple of mice across the balcony, which was really the roof of the porte cochere and had a rail around the edge. It was so dark that at first they didn't see a thing, then Libby-Lou noticed something like a dim light right in front of the house. She drew close to her brother and the two watched the strange thing, which was tall as a tree. Then, slowly it grew more light, sort of white, and after that right near the bottom came a tiny spark, not much bigger than a fire fly. It blinked a couple of times, then there were more sparks, half a dozen of them, pink, blue, yellow, red, orange and lavender. In another second there were dozens of the wee things blinking and twinkling.

"Oh, oh, oh, Libby-Lou, wake up and see the Christmas tree. Wake up quick." It

was Neva who was down in the yard with her father and mother and Bobby too, and the Farrahs were there.

"I'm awake. I'm right up here," Libby-Lou answered. "Mummy, Daddy, Uncle Fred, hurry—" she shouted at the top of her voice.

Of course they came running in to see the marvel. The very tallest evergreen growing near the house, was festooned and decorated exactly as they dress them up in the parks at home in New York, but this one looked ever so much more lovely standing there alive and proudly bearing the decorations on its branches, a shiny cross at the very top. It seemed the envy of all the trees at Points West.

"Oh, oh, oh, it's just as nice as nice," Libby-Lou danced up and down and wanted to go out and put her arms about the beautiful tree.

"What is it, what is it?" The bunk house door flew open and the men poured out, even their big jolly cook, Cal, Dick and Chuck.

"What's all the noise about, I'm asking," demanded Cook as she almost tumbled through the front door.

"I am for asking," echoed Tokie, the Jap-

anese house boy, as he ran around the veranda.

It was very strange that everyone should be up and dressed, but Libby-Lou did not think of that, she was as glad as glad about the lovely tree, and happy that they were all there to share it with her.

"Well, if it didn't go and dress itself up for Christmas," Cal remarked as if he were too surprised for words.

"It's the first time one of my trees behaved that way," Uncle Fred chuckled.

"Aren't you glad you could see it when it lighted up?" Kenneth asked.

"Yes, I am. Merry Christmas, everybody, Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas," everybody answered.

"Better hop into more clothes, Honey," Mummy proposed, so Honey hopped, and when she was dressed, the families who had come to see the lighting, were in the living room. The children were all just as excited as Libby-Lou.

"Stop and have some breakfast," Aunt Margaret invited.

"At home it is cooking," Mrs. Farrah told them.

"Bobby hasn't seen what's in his stock-

ing," Mrs. Miller said, "so we'll be getting along."

"Wait until I get my coat on and I'll go out with you," Libby-Lou urged them, so they waited and soon she was wrapped up. Then the children raced out to the tree.

Just then they heard someone playing the piano, and Mummy started a Christmas carol, so they joined hands and danced about the beautiful tree, some of the grown-ups joined them, and as the darkness faded, they sang all the carols they knew. The sun peeked over the edge of the mountain to see what was going on at Points West. As soon as he knew, be began to beam his brightest, because he didn't look on a happier Christmas morning anywhere.

"We must go," Mrs. Miller said finally.

"Goodbye, see you at dinner time," they called.

"Race you to the presents," Kenneth shouted.

"I'll beat you," Libby-Lou answered promptly and away she went into the living room where so many packages were piled that the two just stood and looked at them.

"Breakfast first," Mummy announced.

"All right," they agreed quickly. And such a breakfast they ate. Tokie trotted back and forth with empty and full plates, until at last they could not eat another mouthful.

"Cook and Tokie come in too," Libby-Lou called because she knew that some of those packages were for the good-natured cook and the Japanese houseboy who had once saved the small girl and Aunt Margaret from a very unpleasant encounter.

"Of course they must come," Aunt Margaret agreed promptly.

"Here's Garwin and Flyer," Kenneth laughed. He found the cat snuggled on the couch, and Garwin came racing through the hall.

"Anybody missing?" Daddy asked, and of course nobody was missing.

"Suppose you hand around the packages, Little Person," Uncle Fred suggested.

"Think you can read all the names?" Mummy wanted to know.

"Of course," Libby-Lou giggled. "Here's one for Cook." It was big and Kenneth had to help slide it across the room. Then the cook began to undo the wrappings and ribbons.

"Why not give out more than one at a time?" Aunt Margaret suggested, and Libby-Lou was glad to do that.

"Kenneth," she read on the biggest of all.

He didn't try to move it, but before he got half the papers off he shouted. "Cracky, it's a portable radio from Uncle Fred," and after that he was so interested that he almost forgot the other things.

"Here's a long one for me," Libby-Lou giggled, then nodded "and one like it, only longer, for Ken." They were opened quickly.

"Skis, Libby-Lou, real skis, like they use in Norway, and in Switzerland, where there's lots of snow."

"Uncle Fred," she laughed and she gave him the package with a kiss, because she knew all about what he would find when he opened the box.

"I suppose it's a pincushion," he grumbled.

"No, it isn't," she declared. It was an opener for his letters, a nice shiny brass one to match his desk set. "Now you won't mind getting letters, will you?"

"I shall look for them," he assured her.

There were presents from Cousin John

and Louisa, from Robert Lane and his grandmother, dozens of things from relatives, old friends and new ones. Never were two children more delighted. But one package nearly made Libby-Lou cry because it had a pair of soft Indian moccasins and a beaded band for her hair. It came from Little-Moon.

"How did it come. Where is she?" Libby-Lou wanted to know.

"We can't tell darling. It came through the post office a week ago but we couldn't make out the post mark," Mummy answered.

"And I can't give her my present." Libby-Lou's lip quivered.

"Save it for her, Honey. Then when we find her you can," Uncle Fred suggested.

"Do you think you can find her?"

"We are trying mighty hard," he answered.

That made Libby-Lou feel better, because when Uncle Fred set out to do a thing, he usually did it, so the packages for the little Indian girl were put away until they could find her.

Of course Kenneth wanted to try his radio, but it was too early to pick up a pro-

gram, so they decided to go out and play with the skis, and about the big tree, which looked quite as beautiful in the sunlight.

Then the guests came. My goodness, what a lot each one had to tell about happenings at home. Bobby brought his stocking with him, and so did little Jean. The children all tried to talk at once, to thank everybody for their presents, and Neva had two new dolls, lovely ones. It was the first time in her life she had such a wonderful Christmas and she hardly realized it wasn't a sort of fairyland she was living in.

And that dinner. Well, it was all a Christmas dinner should be. The folks stayed around the table three hours telling stories, of other Christmas days in far-off lands.

CHAPTER V

HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE whole world at Points West was covered with glistening white snow that was so deep in places that only the tips of the small trees peeked through the drifs and the fence posts were none of them in sight.

Master Jack Frost and all his relations from ever-so-far-North and ever-so-far South, which is just as cold, was making the most remarkable designs on everybody's windows. This jolly fellow had set his very best artist to work on the panes of Uncle Fred's house, but no windows were done more beautifully than Libby-Lou's east ones, because Master Jack new it was the little girl's first winter in the great West, so he was doing his best to show her how truly delightful his favorite season could be.

This special morning, Libby-Lou's window panes looked exactly like a frosted forest, with hidden castles and fairies peeping out for all the world as if they were wondering when she would wake up. A fire crack-

ling noisily on the hearth made them a bit warm and they were thinking of changing into lions, tigers, and wild lilies.

Suddenly the knob of her door turned, slow as slow, and soft as soft, and the door swung in the tiniest crack. Slow as slow it kept opening and the top of a towsled head made its appearance, then a forehead. A tiny bit more and Ken's laughing eyes could be seen. Then, quick as a flash, off went the bed clothes, never stopping until they flew over the footboard, and a pillow went sailing swiftly across the room.

"Happy New Year, Happy New Year, I said it first," Libby-Lou shouted triumphantly.

"Same to you," Ken grinned as he caught the pillow and sent it sailing back with his good wishes. "I thought you were still asleep."

"I waked up when Tokie built my fire and I was watching it. It's like a Princess' land and the Princess' maids are having a dance," she told him.

"What are the Princes doing?" he wanted to know.

"I think one of them is playing leap frog," she giggled.

"Lib-Lou, it's just georgeous out of doors," he said as he sat on the bed. "You know what I was thinking about when I waked up this morning?"

"What is it?"

"That cave up the canyon you girls were in last summer. With snow shoes, we might get up there. Suppose you could show me the way?"

"I guess so. What do you want to go for?"

"I was thinking of Little-Moon. Maybe she was hidden up there."

"We better tell Uncle Fred."

"Happy New Year." It was Mummy who came in and the two children fought for a place in her arms, although there was plenty of room for both of them, but they scrambled just the same because it was fun. Mummy always pretended they were much too heavy for her and made a great ado about it. This made them laugh harder than ever and during the commotion another head popped in.

"I declare a man simply can't get a minute's rest," Uncle Fred grumbled and the most dreadful frown came between his eyes.

"Happy New Year," they roared at him.

"Same to you, same to you," he answered but the scowl did not go away, thereupon Libby-Lou stood up on the bed, pulled him over very close, and she scowled.

"You are so cross there isn't a place to kiss," she declared.

At that the frown ran down to make crow-feet wrinkles by his eyes and they opened wide, so Libby-Lou gave him a kiss, one on each cheek and he just had to smile all over his face.

"Tell you what," he said to his sister. "I can not get over this healthy Little Person who looked as if a puff of wind from my orchard would blow her away when she came flying to me last spring."

"And we all feel the same way about it!" This was Daddy. Then he had to be loved and scrambled over and laughed with until the rafters rang with the merriment, passed out into the world to be picked up by a fierce breeze, who immediately saw the joke and changed his howl to a sort of base chuckle.

"Reception committee?" Aunt Margaret wanted to know. "Happy New Year, I said it first."

They all wished her the same and Kenneth gave her his chair. "Better dress,

Honey, or the whole ranch will be coming here, Mex and all."

"I believe this warm room would suit him very much," Uncle Fred added.

Just then the soft tones of the gong sounded. "That means breakfast will be ready in twenty minutes. I'm going to fly," Kenneth shouted and off he raced.

In twenty minutes the gong sounded again, a sort of chant, as if Tokie thought he was back in his own beloved Japan beating one of the drums in the temple.

"Let's go," Libby-Lou begged her mother, who was tying her hair as Kenneth dashed through the hall. Away she went to catch her brother and they both ran so hard they collided with Tokie who was balancing a heavy tray. He had a dreadful time keeping his feet under him and the food off the floor, but he grinned cheerfully, just the same. Ken gave him a hand to steady the tray.

"Happy New Year," Libby-Lou told him.

"Me to, me to," he chuckled.

While they were at breakfast Dick came in. He was wearing hip boots, a short fur-lined coat, fur-lined gauntlets, and a fur cap.

"You look like an Eskimo," Kenneth told him.

"This is regular North Pole weather. I thought if I could borrow a hand sled I would take the bird box around and see that our feathered friends have their happy New Year."

"Take mine, it's long, and I'll go with you," Libby-Lou announced.

"It's pretty cold," Dick warned.

"I'll wrap up," she declared.

"Very well, I'll be back in half an hour," he promised, and off he went for Libby-Lou's sled, which was one of her Christmas presents.

In half an hour exactly, Libby-Lou was wrapped in her warmest things and looked for all the world like a fur ball, with zippers for feet.

"Here he comes, Lib-Lou," Kenneth called, and Libby-Lou ran out of the door onto the veranda.

"Wait up," she shouted and jumped off the edge. Then a surprising thing happened. She landed on the top of an icy drift. her zippers shot into the air, while her rolly-polly self began to slide and there wasn't a thing to stop her.

Right on she went as if it were a toboggan slide, toward the orchard.

"Put on your breaks," Dick shouted, but Libby-Lou didn't have any brakes to put on, so he ran after her as hard as he could go.

"Bump" she went against an apple tree, that was so startled it dropped a pile of snow over her, but that didn't stop the slide-away, but a moment later, "Bump," she went into a bigger tree.

"Allow me," the tree creaked politely and dropped such a pile of snow that the small girl couldn't go any further.

Quick as anything Dick brushed the snow away, then suddenly he jumped back. "Grrrr! Gerrrrrger!" came a terrible growl, but it was followed by a giggle.

"How come?" Dick demanded.

"I am a bear," she told him.

"If I run away from the bear, the little girl who fell under the snow will go rolling away again," he declared.

"Grrrr—," but her zippers began to do a treadmill. "Don't run away, please."

Dick leaned her against the tree, then went for the sled, and when he came back, she sat on the bird box, and without further mishap, they tied the feast to the trees for

the birds and Libby-Lou giggled happily when the little fellows came hurrying for their breakfast and chirped that they were very much obliged. When the box was empty, they started back to the house and Libby-Lou spied her brother driving the queerest looking thing.

It might have been the front half of an iron row boat with a flat bottom and a very high bow. Two horses were dragging it along the ranch road, and as it went the snow piled up, like waves, on each side.

"Come snowplowing," Kenneth shouted.

"Bow, wow, bow," roared Garwin.

"Sure, you can come, too," Kenneth laughed and the big dog leaped after the strange snowplow.

"Did Mummy say I may?"

"Yep. I'm going over and cut the trails fresh for the Millers," Kenneth answered pulling up the horses with a great flourish and jingle of bells.

"Shall I ride you over or do you prefer to roll?" Dick grinned.

"Please ride me," she laughed, so he went on to the side of the plow, and gave her a hand to climb beside her brother.

"Come snowplowing," Kenneth shouted.

"Sure you can manage those horses, son?" Daddy called from the house.

"Oh sure," Kenneth declared confidently. "By the time we cut a few trails the team won't be so frisky. Cal says they need exercise."

"Very well, be careful. Hang on, Libby-Lou," and Daddy went inside where he waved from the window.

"You have to stand up and take hold of this bar. Can you see over the top?" Ken asked.

"A little," Libby-Lou told him, because the top of the cutter came up to her nose.

"Git-app, old fellows," Ken shouted and away the team trotted up the ranch road, around the curve and along the way that led to the Millers' cabin.

The roads had been kept open pretty well, but a fresh fall of snow that started right after Christmas, had piled them up a bit, and the heavy cutter, with its sharp-as-a-knife nose, zipped along close to the ground and sometimes threw the snow so high that it fell over onto the children's feet.

"Oh," Libby-Lou laughed as she looked back. "We are making a snow canyon." Her brother took a hasty glance over his

shoulder and sure enough the trail was a deep narrow crevice.

"Great, isn't it?" he grinned cheerfully. "Wouldn't folks stare if we went driving up Fifth Avenue this way?"

"Yes," she giggled bracing her feet on the slippery bottom. "I like this better, we don't have to keep stopping for traffic."

As they ran along the horses were making a great noise with the bells, and every once in a while one would make a side step and flounder, as if he didn't like dragging the clumsy thing at all. Garwin ran after them, ahead of them, and on the top of the snow beside them because he thought it was perfectly splendid, and he barked to let them know how much he liked it.

"The horses do not act as nice as they do in the summer time," Libby-Lou remarked anxiously when one of the animals tugged harder than necessary on the reins.

"That's because they have been in the barn so long. This will do them good. That's what Cal said," Kenneth explained.

Sure enough, soon the horses got quieter and by the time they were half way to the Millers', the team was trotting sedately

enough to suit anyone and the children began to sing.

"Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the day
It's lots of fun, to take a run
In a two-horse snowplow sleigh."

It struck them awfully funny and when they stopped laughing they sang it again. The horses thought their driver wanted the bells to ring an accompaniment, so they pranced a bit and shook themselves, making things more jolly than ever.

"Cracky, my gloves are wet and these lines are slippery," Kenneth declared. "I'm going to wind them around my arm." He let one line slide through his hand toward the end, but just at that moment the cutter struck a huge rock in the road and at the same instant the horse jerked his nose almost to his knees.

Over the top of the cutter went the line and the heavy thing jumped into the air with a great clatter. Instantly the horses took fright and flight. Away they ran as if they had just come out of the barn and the loose rein slapped around their heels.

"Hang on," Kenneth shouted. He held the one rein secure, but not too tight, expecting the horses would quiet in a moment, but the whipping rein made them go faster and faster.

Libby-Lou hung on with all her might. She didn't cry out but she was just as frightened as she could be. The cutter did not stay in the roadway as it should, but tipped crazily first one side then the other, leaving a ragged trail and the little girl couldn't keep from being bumped from side to side like a Mexican bean.

"Whoa! Whoa!" Kenneth shouted, but the horses dashed on just as hard as they could go. Their slick coats were getting foamy, as if they had been dipped into the surf. The snow was piling higher on both sides and more was tumbling into the cutter from the flying hoofs.

CHAPTER VI

SNOW GAMES

"Can't you stop them?" Libby-Lou's teeth chattered as she was bounced about the cutter and she had all she could do to keep her hold on the bar.

"I thought they'd run down——"

Just then the horses went under a grove of trees where the snow was not so deep, and as Kenneth had only the rein of the horse on the right, he must have drawn that because the team jerked out of the roadway and went racing into the timber.

"Oh, oh, Kenneth——"

"Bits," he shouted to her. "Get down in the bottom, put your feet out like you do when you are back of me on the sled, and let yourself slide off. Your coats will keep you from getting bumped."

"I don't want to," Libby-Lou protested.

"Please, Honey, hurry, you won't get hurt."

"I don't want to leave you. You might get hurt," she objected.

"I won't. They'll have to stop in a minute when they get into the deep snow. Hurry, Honey, please," he urged because the cutter was bumping harder than ever, the horses were absolutely beyond his control.

"You get out too," she insisted.

"I will," he promised. He helped her sit down in the bottom and steadied her as she wriggled to the edge.

"You come now," she begged.

"In just a minute. At-a-girl."

Libby-Lou let her heels drop and catch into the road and in an instant she was sitting where the cutter had been. Up she jumped and when she glanced around she realized she was near the Miller cabin and she thought perhaps Mr. Miller would be in the house and could come out and help stop the team. She was just starting to run, when she heard Garwin barking furiously and turned about to see what the dog was doing. Just at that moment she saw the big fellow leap to the horse's head and catch the dangling rein in his mouth. She was sure Kenneth still held the other one, so she ran as hard as she could to the big dog, who was pulling on the line for all he was worth and turning the team about sharply.

"Give it to me," Garwin," she called. He didn't pay any attention to her, but he had drawn the line from under the horse's hoofs, so she raced along, grabbed the very end, and hung on so hard that she fell and was pulled along in the snow.

When Kenneth first saw her he was terrified for fear she would be hurt, but he suddenly realized that she had a firm grip on the line, so he jerked on his own rein and managed to pull the horses straight ahead of the cutter and then they plunged into a drift that was so deep they floundered a second, and in a minute more stopped.

"Here's the line," Libby-Lou said grimly as she picked herself up. "I never had a slide like that before."

"Did you get hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"No, but they did pull at first. If Garwin hadn't grabbed hold, I could not have hung on," she said.

"Good old Garwin, he's always finding a way to help us out," Kenneth praised the dog as he made sure his sister was no worse for the tumble she had taken.

"What you children trying to do?" Mr. Miller wanted to know. He had been in the

timber and had heard the team, so he came as fast as he could to the rescue.

Kenneth explained what happened, and after a few minutes when the horses had recovered their wind, he helped get them back to the road, then he said he would drive about their trails, and take the children home. They were both glad to accept. Kenneth felt that he did not want to take a chance with them running away again, and it would be easier on the way back because the way was cleared.

Mrs. Miller invited them to stay in the house for a while, but the clearing job would take only a few minutes, so they said, they guessed they wouldn't.

The trip home was made in record time, but neither of the horses felt like doing any extra stunts after the race they had just finished. Their flanks were foamy and smoky, as if they were on fire, and they were glad enough when Mr. Miller pulled them in at the barn.

"You are a brave little brick," Kenneth told his sister as they made their way to the house.

"Did you say anything to Uncle Fred

about that cave?" Libby-Lou asked, because just then she remembered.

"No, but I will when we get inside."

"You look as if you are enjoying this first day of January," Aunt Margaret smiled when they came in.

"Jan.'s a great old month," Kenneth assured her, then they told about the runaway and Garwin's part in stopping the team.

"Well, you certainly are learning self-reliance," Daddy said, but Mummy looked grave.

"We didn't get hurt, not a bit," Libby-Lou assured her as they got out of their coats and things.

"One thing, we must not forget to arrange for these young people," Aunt Margaret said to Uncle Fred.

"What is that?" he wanted to know.

"A straw ride she told him.

"What is a straw ride?" Libby-Lou promptly demanded.

"You should have called this child, What-is-a," Uncle Fred chuckled.

"It's something that everybody enjoys, but it's the mostest fun when you do it the first time and do not know too much about it," Aunt Margaret answered.

"That's what Uncle Fred said about the Hallowe'en day. Now I know it will be fun," she giggled happily. "When does it come?"

"We have to set the date for that and it is early because the winter is still young," Uncle Fred said.

At lunch, Kenneth remembered about the cave. "Oh, Uncle Fred, do you suppose anyone took Little-Moon to that cave up the canyon?"

"I would hardly think so, but we never looked," he answered.

"Well, I was thinking about it. Libby-Lou knows the way."

"It's not very good weather for a small girl to go up the canyon," Uncle Fred answered positively.

"Couldn't I on my snowshoes?" Libby-Lou asked.

"Suppose you tell me about how you found it."

So Libby-Lou explained how they went up the canyon to where the cliffs reach the water, and then they climbed up the side and found the sort of long winding hallway that led them to the big, deep open basin with the cave entrance on the other side.

"I imagine the whole place will be full of snow and no one could have used it, still, we do not want to overlook any place. I'll think about it and call up Mason. He knows those mountains over there better than I do and he may have some suggestions. Glad you remembered about it," he said and the children hoped they would find a trace anyway of their missing playmate.

Lunch was just finished when there was a great laughing in the yard. "Whoo—whoo—whoo——. Libby-Lou, can you come out and play with us? We haven't any lessons today."

It was Neva and Monzella and little Jean on a sled and Libby-Lou ran to the window. The two small girls were on their web snowshoes, and the little boy was bundled up to his laughing eyes.

"Mummy, may I go?" she coaxed.

"You were out all morning, dear."

"I know it, but I'd like to go some more."

"All right, but do not stay too long."

"Want me to come along?" Kenneth asked.

"Sure," she said promptly, because Kenneth always found some jolly way to play.

In short order they joined the children waiting by the Christmas tree.

"Want to play a new game?" Ken suggested.

"Sure," Neva answered promptly.

"Jean must stay on the sled," Monzella announced.

"That's all right. We'll play with him and he'll like it. You all stay here with your backs turned to the barns and count two hundred, not too fast. I'll take Jean with me and you come and find us. We can hide any place we want to, but nobody must stay hidden more than five minutes. How's that?"

"We can follow the sled and snowshoe tracks," Libby-Lou reminded her brother.

"I thought this out the other day. Let's see if it's as easy as it sounds," he laughed.

"All right," they agreed and turned their backs. While they counted to one hundred they could hear the sled rushing over the hard snow, but then they didn't hear it anymore and finally they got to two hundred.

"We're coming," Libby-Lou shouted.

They followed the sled and the snowshoe tracks and Libby-Lou wondered if Kenneth hadn't thought of something harder. They

giggled happily as they went along the ranch road, past the barns and into the woods. Then the tracks led them to quite a thick grove where the ground was bare because the branches of the tree were thick and very low down.

The little girls ran around searching along the edge of the snow until they picked up the tracks again and started in high glee. Suddenly Neva stopped.

"Libby-Lou, we're going the wrong way," she called.

"How come?" Libby-Lou looked at the tracks.

"This part is pointing at us," Neva pointed out.

The girls examined it in surprise and sure enough it was plain that the outline was of snowshoes going the other way.

"We must go back," Monzella laughed. "Kenneth is playing a joke, but we catch it."

Back they went and were just as puzzled as three little girls could be because they could not find another track starting from the grove. A gust of wind blew in their faces and Libby-Lou turned her back on it, then suddenly she thought of something. Of

course Kenneth would find a way to make it harder than just following the tracks, and she laughed out loud at her idea.

"What is it?" Monzella wanted to know.

"I don't see anything funny. Maybe he jumped. Let's see if he did that," Neva proposed and began to look for tracks further away from the grove, but she didn't see any.

"That isn't what he did," Libby-Lou laughed.

"Shall we wait five minutes for him to come out?" Neva wanted to know, because she couldn't think of another thing.

"No, we'll find him. Let's hurry," and she started back.

"What do you think he do?" Monzella asked because she thought it was quite useless to follow the tracks back.

"I think he walked backwards," Libby-Lou answered, and then they all laughed as hard as they could laugh and how they did hurry to catch the boy before he came out.

The trail led in a roundabout way, but finally it stopped at the bunk house door, and there was the sled leaning against the wall and from inside they could hear Jean chuckling.

"We found you," Libby-Lou shouted as she threw open the door.

"You are good woodsmen," Kenneth admitted. He and Baby Jean were enjoying a cookie, and the big cook passed the tin to all of them.

"Now, do you want to hide? I'll give you extra time," Kenneth offered.

But just then Monzella saw the clock. "Jean, he must be home for his nap," she said quickly.

"We'll play some other time, and you all think up tricks, because the rule is you have to leave some sort of trail," Kenneth told them.

"We will," they declared.

When they went out of the bunk house they saw Neva's father, so she decided to go home, and then Kenneth and Libby-Lou thought they might as well go in and read some of the books they had not had a chance to look at since Christmas.

CHAPTER VII

THE SEARCH

THE two children, with Garwin and Flyer were having a glorious romp and having so much fun that Libby-Lou and Kenneth were laughing as hard as they could laugh, the dog was growling and barking, but the yellow cat wasn't making a bit of noise, although he was certainly enjoying himself.

"I think you should call this the Laughing House, Margaret. I do not believe the youngsters have laughed so much in their lives as they have since they came here," Mummy said.

"There are lots of laughs twinkling about," she admitted and she had to join in because Garwin and the cat were doing some kind of tumbling act together, and Uncle Fred, who came in just in time to see the two rolling over and over, laughed a big ha-ha-ha.

"If it's the Laughing House, where does Uncle Fred find his scowls that he wears sometimes?" Libby-Lou demanded.

"I have to keep them in my pocket and watch them close because if they got away, they would surely turn into laughs," he told her.

"Then turn your pockets inside out—lining side out," Kenneth proposed, because just then Cook called to tell Garwin that his food was ready for him and the dog raced away with the cat at his heels.

"Maybe he'd find a silver lining," Mummy said.

"I have been talking with Mason over the telephone about that cave. He doesn't know the place but thinks it's a good idea to look into it, so he and some of his men are going to meet me at the mouth of the canyon and we'll investigate."

"I'll go with you," Daddy offered.

"May I?" Kenneth asked.

"I'll show you the way," Libby-Lou jumped up quickly, but Mummy looked doubtfully at her brother.

"This isn't a very good time of year for a little girl to go cliff climbing," Uncle Fred said.

"But I know the way," Libby-Lou protested. "I can go on my snowshoes just like the rest."

Uncle Fred was thoughtful for a moment, then he said. "She does know the way, but it is too hard traveling for such a small person. We might take her on her hand sled and if she points out the place to get through it will save time." He looked at Daddy and Mother.

"If you think it's all right, Fred," Mummy answered.

"We'll take the best care of her," he promised.

"And I'll be along," Kenneth put in, then added, "and Dad."

"And I'll be careful, Mummy," Libby-Lou promised eagerly.

"All right, dear," Mummy agreed.

"We are going to start right away, so bundle her up good. And Ken, too, put on your mufflers, it's a nice clear day, but mighty cold," Uncle Fred told them, so warmest wraps were pulled out of closets, Ken got Libby-Lou's sled from the shed, and Aunt Margaret got out the fur automobile robe.

Finally they were ready to start. Libby-Lou was on the sled and tied so she couldn't slip off. The robe was under and all around her with one corner arranged so it would

come down over her face. The men wore high boots, short coats, mufflers, heavy caps and mittens, they each had a long stout stick with a sharp steel point and of course were on snowshoes. Cal and Dick joined them at the bunk house. They each had long ropes.

Up the ranch road they started and in a few minutes they met Mr. Farrah, who was going along, and then they turned toward the meadow and cut across on the smooth surface. Libby-Lou was anxious and excited and oh how she did wish they would find some trace of Little-Moon, but she hoped the loved playmate had not been living in the cave through those long cold weeks. It was nice riding on the sled, the men seemed hardly to feel the burden, and she was as cozy as a "bug in a rug."

Across the meadow they went quickly and quietly, then they turned into the timber and went over the place where the old log road was, only it had not been broken. The only way she could tell that it was the road, was the opening in the trees. Up a hill they started to climb then Daddy and Dick came back of the sled to be sure she was all right. It was a good thing she was tied on because

some parts were pretty steep and she might have gone sliding off backwards.

At last they came to the dell which, when she saw it last summer, was carpeted with flowers, but now only the tips of little trees and foliage poked through. The branches of the maples, birch, mountain ash, and willows looked exactly like skeletons of themselves, but the pines, fir and cedars were dark green and lovely against their white background.

There wasn't a sign of the old broken rail fence Mex jumped over so many times, but presently the party entered the pasture. It did not look a bit like a pasture now. There wasn't a spear of anything that cow could eat. The tips of some of the tallest ferns poked up like dried sticks close to the granite rocks where they grew.

"What are all the flowers and things doing now, Daddy?" she asked because she just could not help wonder if the pasture would be very full of lovely growing things, flowers and wild strawberries again.

"They are all warm and snug under the snow and they are all as busy as they can be getting ready for spring and summer," he told her.

"Doesn't make any difference how bare and bleak the old world looks, flowers and beautiful things are always growing and will find their way to the sun. Isn't that so, Professor?" Dick remarked because he had an idea how Libby-Lou felt.

"Yes, indeed, absolutely true," Daddy answered positively and the little girl felt a lot better.

They went on along the lowest part of the pasture, then started up the steep hillside and here the men who were pulling the sled had to turn around to see that it went where it should. Dick pushed from the back and presently they made the top. By that time Kenneth was beginning to feel that the trip was a pretty strenuous one.

"It's lucky, Lib-Lou, that you didn't try to come on snowshoes," he told her as he stopped to catch his breath. A stiff wind was blowing and he wrapped the ends of his muffler about his face.

Daddy turned the corner of the fur robe down a bit and pulled it more over Libby-Lou's chin.

"You must tell us just the instant you feel cold," Uncle Fred warned her very seriously.

"I will," she promised, but her voice was muffled.

"How about the feet?" Dick inquired.

"They are fine," she insisted.

"All right, we'll go on," Uncle Fred said and they started through the thick timber on the plateau.

There it was a little more sheltered, the wind wasn't so sharp and in fifteen minutes more they were at the top of the ravine.

"Guess we better put brakes on," Dick suggested, so he stopped while he slipped one of the ropes above the runners at the back of the sled. "All set," he said when he was finished, then he and Daddy held the "brake" and they started down the hill.

The sled would have liked it very much to run away down that hill because it was as slick and slippery as a slide, but the two men held it back and the ones in front guided it where it should go. They had to use their Alpine sticks to keep themselves from going too fast and Kenneth almost took a tumble, so Cal helped him keep on his feet.

It did not take long to get to the bottom of the ravine, then they startled for the canyon and the way was pretty easy because it

was not very steep, but like a nice long hill. Finally they came out at the creek and here Libby-Lou got another surprise. Except right in the middle, where the current was strongest, the water was frozen solid, and in some places, all the way across.

The men tested the strength of the ice, found a place where they could cross with safety and soon they were on the other side, where the trail started up the canyon.

"Hello there," came a cheery call.

"Hello, Mason, you beat us to it," Uncle Fred answered.

"No, we just got here," Mason grinned. There were three other men with him. They were dressed like the men from the ranch, had more ropes and two of them carried rifles.

"Didn't know what we may run into," Mason said as he joined the party and introduced his companions.

"Didn't think of bringing a gun, but it's not a bad idea," Uncle Fred told them. "Shall we start?"

"Right-o," Mason agreed and they set out. They passed the spot where Little-Moon had pointed out the wild fawn, only now the foliage that had hidden the lovely little

animal, was all gone, and only bare branches, that wouldn't conceal anything, were there.

A part of the way they went along on the ice because that was not hilly and at last they came to the place where the great cliffs arose like a wall at the edge of the creek.

"Is this the place?" Uncle Fred asked and Libby-Lou nodded.

"Want to get off and stretch a bit?"

"Yes," she said promptly and it certainly did feel good to get her feet under her again. She stomped about a bit, then went to find the place where the children had started to climb that day they discovered the entrance to the cave section.

That side of the canyon was not very snowy, but the cliffs were covered with ice and the steps the children had climbed easily were slippery. Libby-Lou started along the way she remembered, Uncle Fred and Daddy were close behind her, and the other men followed further apart. They left the sled and the robe by the creek because they would not need them until they started back home.

The place in the winter looked so very different from what it did in the summer, that Libby-Lou was puzzled and almost afraid

she couldn't find the opening at all, but she stopped often, as she climbed, to look back and around, and finally she gave a happy laugh.

"Here it is," she called.

The men gathered close to inspect the place, but just a few feet in, the hallway was full of drifts and slick ice. One of Mr. Mason's men glanced about carefully, saw a tree stump that projected out over the edge of the cliff and he took his rope, looped one end, sent it whirling into the air. The loop caught over the stump, he pulled on it hard to be sure it wouldn't break, then started to climb. He looked just like a man doing circus stunts and went up that rope in short order. Presently he reached the top and climbed over. They waited a minute while he looked about.

"I think I see a way you can all get up here," he called, "wait a bit." He disappeared again, then came back. "Yes. Go on around past this wall, there's quite a ledge and you can come up all right."

They followed the way he pointed out, reached the ledge, and then, after a bit of steep climbing, they came up beside him. Then they all followed the rim of the hall-

way and were soon standing looking down into the basin.

"The cave is over there," Libby-Lou pointed out, but they could not see an opening, not even the clump of thick bushes that had concealed the entrance, but they made their way around to that side and carefully studied the situation.

"Certainly doesn't look habited," Mr. Mason remarked.

"Suppose I slide down there and make sure," proposed the man who had climbed up the cliff.

"Guess it is a good idea," Mr. Mason agreed, so the man tied his rope about the trunk of the nearest tree and soon he was lowering himself over the side. He landed near the place where Libby-Lou thought the cave entrance should be, but there was a deep drift of snow covering that part.

They watched the man examine the place, saw him pick up a slender pole that had been chopped for some purpose or other but not used, then he kicked at the snowdrift, which proved not deep at all.

"Some one built a shelter over it," he called to them.

"I'll come down and help you," Dick

volunteered. He drew the rope up, made a number of knots in it, then he went over the side, using the knots to catch his feet and keep him from going too fast.

Then the two men set to work uncovering the cave entrance. It took them only a few moments and the people on the top watched anxiously when they saw the last of the saplings being thrown aside. The cave was now in plain sight, and Libby-Lou almost wanted to cry she was so excited. The men went inside, one of them had a flashlight, and after a few minutes they came out again.

"It has been used and I think not so long ago, but no one is here now," he called to the eager watchers.

"Find anything to identify who it might be?" Uncle Fred called.

"Yes, I'll bring it up," he answered, then the other man came out.

"Let's take more of a look down here," he suggested, so they searched all about the huge basin, from one side to the other.

CHAPTER VIII

VALENTINES

"WHAT did you find?" Uncle Fred asked quickly when the two men were safely back upon the ledge.

"Some one lived there not so very long ago, I should say. Looks as if whoever it was hunted considerably. There are a lot of rabbit skin parts, and a piece of deer skin, also some feathers and empty bean cans. Back in a corner of rubbish I picked up this," the man answered and handed over a piece of tree bark.

Uncle Fred took it quickly, studied it a moment, frowning the while and Libby-Lou couldn't restrain her impatience.

"Does it tell anything, Uncle Fred?" she begged to know. He handed the bark to her and she had more trouble making it out than he did. Kenneth was looking over her shoulder.

"Looks like a sun burned on one side. Little-Moon is plain enough but what does cosin mean?" he asked.

"Cousin perhaps," Daddy suggested. "Let me see, dear."

He studied the bit more carefully then said. "There's an N at the top, Fred, and that sun is representing the East, I believe. Those queer things going across may be three tracks, going toward the sun. Suppose it means the child is with a cousin who is taking her East?"

"That may be. Anyway, it's a relief to know she is all right. I'll get in touch with the Agent, the interpreter up there may be able to read this for us," Uncle Fred answered, then added. "I surely am very much obliged to you fellows for your good help."

"Don't mention it. Glad we didn't find anything worse and sorry we did not find something better," Mr. Mason answered heartily.

"Think I'll do a bit of hunting while I'm here," one of the men who carried a rifle said.

"We must get this Little Person home as fast as we can," Uncle Fred told them, so the two parties divided and soon Libby-Lou was on the sled, wrapped snug and warm, but not once all the way home did she say a

word, she didn't even smile when the men joked.

At home Mummy unwrapped mufflers and things, and finally, when she was all out of the heavy things, Libby-Lou began to cry as if her heart would break.

"Why, darling, what is it?" Mummy wanted to know. Daddy picked her up in his arms and held her close.

"Don't cry, dear, we know Little-Moon is all right, and we'll find her one of these days."

"B—b—but if I—I—I had thought of the c—cave, w—we could h—have found her before and it must be awful to live u—up there in the cold," she wailed.

"I do not believe that she was cold, Honey, You know the Indians are accustomed to out-of-doors and they take care of themselves," Daddy soothed.

"We grown-ups are the ones who should scold ourselves for not thinking of the cave, Little Person. Now, don't you cry any more, because I'm sure the Agent will know about this cousin of Little-Moon's, and first thing you know, we will find her," Uncle Fred declared positively.

"Say Mother, what's in the package?"

Kenneth tried to help out by catching up a big package addressed to his mother and began to shake it vigorously.

"I hope it isn't something that spills," Daddy laughed. "You'll have it all over the place."

"Chuck brought it up while you were away and I am not sure whether any of it will spill or not," Mummy answered.

"May I open it?" Kenneth demanded next. Out of the corner of his eye he could see that Libby-Lou was getting interested.

"If you will be careful not to make a mess of the wrappings," she said.

"Cracky, I won't," Kenneth promised and his small sister wriggled around in Daddy's arms, then sat on his knee where she could watch. "Do you know what's in it?"

"No," she answered and wiped her eyes but the sobs didn't all go away at once.

Kenneth had the cord broken, but before he took off the outer wrapping he stopped. "It comes from New York, looks like Cousin Louisa's writing. Guess what it is," he coaxed.

"Some books," she answered finally.

"I guess it's some sewing things for

Mother and Aunt Margaret," he said. "Maybe that isn't fair because I heard them talking about getting some things," he grinned.

Quickly he took off the papers, then revealed a large cardboard box, but it didn't have a name on the outside. Libby-Lou slipped down and came close when the top came off. There were packages, a lot of them, each wrapped in papers and tied with a string. Some were in rolls, some round, some square, some oblong, some hard and some lumpy. Kenneth picked up a squarish box, opened that and there was the most fascinating array of tiny red hearts, flowers, mottoes and wreaths. One long roll proved to be gold paper, another one was silver, and in a flat one were sheets of paper that looked exactly like lace. Libby-Lou's eyes began to dance.

"Oh, Mummy, is it for valentines?" she giggled.

"That's exactly what it is," Mummy smiled. "There are boxes of cut-outs and a book of designs."

"Like I had last year, only lots more," Libby-Lou's feet began to dance happily. "Is Valentine's Day almost here?"

"It doesn't come until the fourteenth of February, but I thought you will have to get to work on your valentines early enough to get some mailed East."

"If I do not make mine too big, is there enough so Neva and Monzella can make some too?" she asked eagerly.

"I do not believe that Neva ever heard of valentines, dear. Perhaps Monzella did not, either, but I sent for enough for all of you, I think."

"Wonder when they can come?" Libby-Lou demanded.

"Suppose we send a polite note to the Madams Farrah and Miller requesting the presence of their daughters' company at a valentine making, say tomorrow afternoon," Uncle Fred proposed and Libby-Lou was delighted with the plan.

"I'll leave the things in the box until they get here," she decided and gave Mummy and Aunt Margaret a kiss each by way of thank you.

"I believe," Daddy said very thoughtfully, "that this evening is time to get our Prince out of his disconcerting predicament."

"Will you tell me more of the story," Libby-Lou giggled.

"I surely will," he promised, so he got a kiss and Uncle Fred got one too, because he always deserved one, and he never refused them.

That evening Libby-Lou was ready for bed early. She had had a strenuous day and was tired, so as soon as she was tucked in, Daddy came up, drew the chair beside the bed. He did not forget to clear his throat this time, and he made believe take a drink of water while the little girl giggled eagerly.

"Well," he began in his most professorish manner, "we left the Prince turning summersaults out of the tree over the magic river. The One-who-wanted-to-be-Prince-himself was on the branch close behind, so when the Prince slid off the very end, the branch came up quickly and bounced the One-who-wanted-to-be-Prince-himself down onto the bank. He didn't bother to look to see what became of the Prince, because everyone knew that when anyone fell into the magic river, he never came back, so this chap started home to proclaim himself Prince.

"What happened to the real Prince?"

"It was this way. A nice big log was sailing along and it went right under the Prince and carried him along with it to wherever it was going. At first the Prince expected dreadful things would happen to him but nothing did, so he stood up on the log and enjoyed the scenery. At that point the river was wide and not very swift, but by and by it got more narrow and swift and the Prince felt as if he were on an express train, only he didn't know anything about express trains. Then the log began to tip and as it was rushing under another tree, the Prince decided he would like to go ashore, so he grabbed a branch, but the branch wanted to travel too, and it broke off. The situation was beginning to be serious. The Prince let one end of the branch drag in the water, and after a few minutes he discovered that the branch was guiding the log toward the shore. That interested the Prince so much that he did some experimenting, and presently he was astride the log, and making it go just where he liked."

"He was a good Prince," Libby-Lou said.

"Yes, indeed. His actions were very commendable, but he was absent-minded and got so interested in his first rowing lesson that

he didn't pay much attention to the river as he should have done and he was almost in a rapids before he realized his danger. It took a lot of hard work to get the log to the shore, but finally he managed it, and then he drove a stake in the ground so the log couldn't get away. You see he thought the log and the branch were both magic and he did not want to lose them, but he did want something to eat. He looked around for some fish for supper, and suddenly he saw a hippogriff coming right toward him."

"What's a hippogriff?"

"It's a very convenient animal for fairy stories because it was a little like a horse, had a good pair of wings, and a head like a griffin but nobody ever saw one, really, except in fairy stories. This one had short front feet and the Prince was afraid because he had no idea what the animal would do, but it was coming toward him as fast as it could come."

Just then a clock struck, so Daddy stopped. "To be continued in our next?" Libby-Lou laughed. "Thank you, Daddy."

"Goodnight, dear heart, pleasant dreams," and he tip-toed out.

The next afternoon, right after lunch,

"It's lovely," the others assured her and they went to work again.

Neva and Monzella came down to the valentine making, and Mummy was right, neither little girl knew about it, but Monzella did know about St. Valentine.

"I don't know who to make one for," Neva said after Libby-Lou had explained all about the wonderful box of materials.

"Oh," Monzella said promptly, "for the mother and daddy. For Libby-Lou I'll make one."

So they set to work on a sewing table Aunt Margaret put up and in a few minutes they were having a wonderful time. Neva produced the first one well sprinkled with hearts.

"It's lovely," the others assured her and they went to work again. Libby-Lou made a funny one for Uncle Fred. She cut out a bear from a magazine Mummy didn't want any more, then she pasted on a huge heart, and how they all laughed.

Of course there were other days during January, and the first part of February, Feb., for short, when they made valentines, and when they were all finished they were taken to the postoffice, that is the ones that had to be mailed, but the others were kept in a safe place until the fourteenth came around.

But the twelfth, which is Lincoln's birthday, came two days before Valentine's Day. Because it was a holiday, and a fine one, lessons were suspended, Cook prepared a special dinner for the family, and after that, Daddy and Uncle Fred, in fact all the grown-ups told stories of the splendid man who was President and who stood so loyally for the Union of the United States, and gave his life, practically, so the country would not be split into two nations instead of continuing as one.

Libby-Lou thought he must have been pretty nice, and Kenneth cut his picture out of a paper, and fitted it into a frame for her room.

Then, valentine morning came, and when Libby-Lou waked up she found a bag on her rug that looked exactly like a U. S. mail bag, only it was made of paper instead of canvas. Out of bed she hopped, and then began a series of squeals and she pulled out the envelopes for herself and the family.

There were so many to look at and read that Libby-Lou almost missed her breakfast, but as soon as it was over, Neva and Monzella came running to the ranch house to show the pretty and jolly ones

they had found in their own mail bags.

"My mother made me one," Neva announced joyfully, "and so did Dad, and Bobby got some too, but he wanted to eat them.

"One came all the way from the dear France to me," Monzella declared, and showed them her treasure.

"They are all just beautiful and I think St. Valentine was especially good to you little people," Aunt Margaret declared.

"Wouldn't it have been nice to teach Little-Moon about them?" Neva suggested.

"Yes," Libby-Lou said soberly. "Oh, Uncle Fred, did the Agent know anything?"

"He does. He knows about a cousin who lives in one of the Middle States, and he is going to have the man looked up. The interpreter says that Little-Moon's message is that the cousin is, or was, taking her East, but of course she couldn't let us know how far."

"Does he think she's all right?"

"Oh yes, and he's gone to find her."

"Oh, oh, I am glad." Libby-Lou danced up and down, and Neva and Monzella joined in her song. "I am glad, I am glad," they sang.

CHAPTER IX

THE LA FAYETTE PARTY

FEBRUARY, was only half gone and the air was chuck full of mystery. Uncle Fred had sent telegrams to the nearest big city, which really was not very near or very big when it comes to that. Mrs. Farrah had been down in secret conference with Aunt Margaret and Mummy, and Mummy and Aunt Margaret went up to the Farrahs' in secret conference with Mrs. Farrah. So, taking it all in all, Libby-Lou was so excited she could hardly do her lessons, much less keep her mind and her fingers on her practicing.

"Did I ever hear that before?" Daddy wanted to know and he sat down on the piano bench to see if he could help.

"Oh, Daddy, what is it?" Libby-Lou begged.

"Sharps, I'm sure," he told her soberly.

"I know that, but, Daddy, what's everybody doing?"

"Well, I'm right here, you are making the

piano keys do the funniest things, and there goes Dick to the postoffice, and Tokie——"

"I don't mean that, Daddy, and don't you tease," she gave him a kiss to stop him. "What is everybody doing?"

"Didn't I try to tell you——" he began again.

"Oh, no—Daddy. Is it a surprise?"

"Well," he laughed. "I should not be surprised if it is a surprise, but you'd be no end surprised if you knew how little I know about it, whatever it is." Then he gave her a kiss. "Suppose we forget about it for the next thirty minutes and make those keys behave."

So they did, and Daddy played the nicest accompaniment to Libby-Lou's lesson, and she got so interested in the duets that she really did forget for thirty minutes, and for four days. Then, one morning she found a neat little envelope on the table beside her plate, and on the outside was written, in a very neat little hand:

Miss Elizabeth Kerwood

"What is it?" Libby-Lou giggled.

Thereupon, Uncle Fred picked it up very

gingerly, turned it over and around as if he expected it might bite him, looked underneath and on top. "I never can tell from the outside," he said with a great sigh.

"Of course you can't," Libby-Lou laughed at him and she opened the envelope carefully and read aloud:

20 February

Miss Elizabeth Kerwood,

Miss Monzella Farrah begs you to come to La Fayette Party, 22 Feb. ruary, five o'clock, at her home.

Respectfully yours,
MONZELLA

R S V P

"Does it mean that she is going to have a party, and what for is the R S V P?" she demanded.

"Oh, Lib-Lou, don't you remember, Mrs. Farrah gave us that just a few days ago; respond if you please. Monzella wrote her letter a little as she would if she were in France, that's why she puts the day of the month first. I got one too," Ken explained.

Libby-Lou scowled as she tried to remember, then Mother helped her. "Repondre, s'il vous plait."

"Now, I remember," Libby-Lou laughed as she repeated it. "But what kind of party is a La Fayette party?"

"My dear, you must eat your breakfast, you *must* be terribly hungry, or you would use your thinking cap more," Daddy told her as if he felt very grieved about it.

Not another word would anyone say, so Libby-Lou obeyed, of course. She drank her orange juice, but that did not help her thinking cap, then she ate her cereal, but that did not help, then she drank her milk and took a bit of toast, and by that time she felt something buzzing around in her head. She began to remember something Mother had read to her only a few days ago. She opened her eyes wide-as-wide. Daddy's sad look slipped away as she began to laugh.

"I don't know yet what a La Fayette party is like," she told them, "But Mummy read about George Washington. He was the General of the American Army."

"Yes, and what else?" Ken asked.

"Well, the Marquis Marie Jean Paul—and some other names."

"Roch Yves Gilbert Motier La Fayette," Kenneth helped her.

"Yes. The Marquis was a French gentle-

man and he sailed to America and offered his sword to General Washington and helped him fight the Revolutionary War," she cried gleefully.

"Correct, now aren't you glad that you have eaten most of your breakfast? By the time you finish you will have an idea why Monzella is giving a La Fayette party on the twenty-second of February," Uncle Fred encouraged, and he was right.

"She's got it," Ken declared proudly as his small sister began to choke on her last bite of toast.

"Because Monzella is French and it's George Washington's birthday," she giggled.

"Good old thinking cap," Daddy laughed.

"Never works so well on an empty tummy," Uncle Fred added.

"Or when a little girl forgets she has it to use," Mother smiled.

"I'll 'R S V P' right away. Mummy, shall I write as we do, or as Monzella did?" she wanted to know.

"It would be courteous to write as Monzella did," Mother said.

In half an hour the letter was finished and this is the way she wrote it:

21 February

Miss Monzella Farrah,

Miss Elizabeth Kerwood is very happy to come to your La Fayette Party.

Respectfully yours,
LIBBY-LOU

"That is fine," Daddy approved. "Where's your letter, Kenneth?"

"Right here," Ken produced it. He had written:

Dear Monzella,

That's a nice invitation and you bet I'll be there.

Yours,
Ken

"Brief, to the point, and not too formal," Uncle Fred chuckled.

"We are all invited," Mother explained. "We sent for some costumes, because it is to be a fancy dress party. The things should be here tomorrow."

"Then *this* is the surprise," Libby-Lou shouted. "Oh, won't it be the best fun, just the best fun. A La Fayette party, a La

Fayette party," she sang as she gathered up her books.

"Hope we're all well and hearty
Hope we're all well and hearty."

Kenneth sang after them that struck them as funny so they sang it again together.

"A La Fayette Party,
Hope you're all well and hearty."

The time went flying by and everybody surely was well and hearty. At half-past four Mr. Mason drove up in their bob-sled with his wife and Dorothy. A minute later Cal drove to the door with the family's long sled and they all piled into that. "Crack," went the two whips, just to make a noise, the teams jumped, the bells jingled merrily as they raced up the ranch road. The Millers, in a smaller sled, fell in behind and soon they were all dashing through a bit of woods, past the poultry houses, and to the Farrahs' cottage. They pranced in fine style to the door which was immediately opened by Mr. Farrah.

"You are good to come," he welcomed

them. He looked fine as the Marquis de La Fayette, and Mrs. Farrah as the Countess. Inside the house was the gayest flutter of American and French flags, big ones and little ones, flowers, evergreen trimmings, and more colored candies than the children could count; here, there, and everywhere.

Everybody wore long-time-ago costumes that were pretty and dignified. Monzella and little Jean wore the darlingest dresses that really came from France, and they both looked as if they had stepped out of a painting. Daddy and Mummy were George and Martha Washington, Ken and Libby-Lou George's adopted children. The small girl loved the old-fashioned dress but she was mighty glad that she did not have to wear it all the time. How could she ever ride Mex? The Masons were the Benj. Franklins, Uncle Fred and Aunt Margaret, the Alexander Hamiltons and Neva was a darling Priscilla, while Mr. and Mrs. Miller were John Adams and his wife.

Of course the party started off with a lot of happy chatter. Everybody tried very hard to remember who they were supposed to be, they could not help forgetting occasionally. It sounded queer when the Marquis

remarked to Hamilton: "The two new incubators will be running tomorrow."

"Fine," said Hamilton, who never really heard of an incubator and would have thought any one crazy who suggested such a thing.

Benjamin Franklin promised the Countess he would show her how to start a mushroom bed, forgetting that Franklin, who knew a lot about electricity, didn't know anything about such beds. Little Jean looked odd hugging a Teddy bear close to his elaborate frock, which was made when little boys wore dresses until they were four or five years old.

Six o'clock came before anyone realized it and the guests assembled for an old-time supper. The table cloth was a red checked one, and the table itself was as dainty and attractive as only a French hostess could make it. There were wee place cards, cunning favors, tall candles, more flags, greens and flowers, while in the center was a very real looking garden made of candy. It all had to be exclaimed over and admired. They didn't keep still, not even when they ate the roast goose, and all the nice things that went with it, right through cakes and pies.

Before they finished, they started a game of conundrums around the table, and when they got a bit tired of that they played "Who's got the button?" Mrs. Mason suggested it and started off by rolling a round button across to Kenneth, who passed it to Uncle Fred. He passed it under Libby-Lou's hand, then it went to Mrs. Miller, while the guests on the other side had to guess where it was.

Back in the living room they played charades, and had no end of fun, but half past eight came, which meant that it was time to say goodnight to the young hostess and her mother. Everybody voted the party a great success, and then, amid the merry jingle of sleigh bells, they started down the ranch road for home.

CHAPTER X

THE STRAWRIDE

"WHAT are you trying to do with White Cloud?" Libby-Lou asked Cal who was in the corral leading Little-Moon's pony up and down through the snow.

"Give him some exercise. He isn't very well and your Uncle thinks this may make him feel better," Cal told her.

Libby-Lou climbed up onto the fence to watch. "Do you think he misses Little-Moon?"

"I reckon that's the real trouble, Libby-Lou. He's just plumb lonesome for that little girl he has palled with all his life, and he won't let anyone else go near him but me."

Cal walked up and down a couple of times and Libby-Lou sat quietly thinking about the pony, then she had an idea.

"When Little-Moon was here he would let me pet him," she called. "Maybe if I pet him now and talk to him, it will help."

"Maybe it will," Cal said doubtfully, but by that time the small girl was clamboring down the inside of the fence, bent on helping the big horse if she could.

White Cloud saw her and snorted angrily, so she stopped, but she didn't go back. "Don't be afraid, White Cloud, don't be afraid," she coaxed and held out her hand. "Have you got some sugar?"

"Yes, but he won't touch it."

"Please give me some." Cal reached out the full length of his arm, and Libby-Lou reached the full length of hers and got the sugar, then she began to talk again. White Cloud pawed and snorted and jerked on his halter, but she went right on talking, as nearly as she could imitate the tone Little-Moon used. After several minutes, the pony looked at her less suspiciously. Very, very slowly she came closer, and after a long time the horse stopped his pawing and stood quietly. She held out her hand and coaxed him some more, and finally he let her come close enough so he could sniff the sugar. Presently he tasted it, then he ate it all, and after that he let her pet his soft nose. Last of all he let her stroke his neck, and run her

fingers back of his ears the way Little-Moon did.

"Don't you fret, dear. Uncle Fred is going to find Little-Moon, and bring her back to you, and she'll ride you again, every-day," she promised. White Cloud seemed to take her word for it, and after awhile Cal lifted her on his back and she rode him up and down the corral and when he had enough exercise, she rode him right into his own big box stall, where Cal gave him a big supper and he ate every bit of it.

"Reckon you'll have to come and see him every day so he won't get lonesome again," the man laughed.

"I will," Libby-Lou giggled. She gave the pony another pat, and skipped happily to the house.

"Never guess what we are going to do this afternoon, Lib-Lou," Kenneth greeted her.

"What?" she demanded.

"Going strawriding."

"Oh, what——"

"No questions," Aunt Margaret warned, then Libby-Lou remembered it was most fun when it was a surprise, so she didn't ask a single what.

Half an hour later everybody was all wrapped up and Dick drove the longest bob-sled, with four horses to pull it, and the box was piled high with clean hay. "You'll have to excuse the substitute," he told them, "it's better than straw."

Laughing they got into the back of the bob-sled, their feet buried in the substitute straw, and auto robes to help keep them warm. Then, with a great cracking of whip, a merry jingle of bells, they started. Just as they got into the ranch road, the Farrahs and Millers came whizzing along in a smaller sled, with more bells jingling and two happy families "hurrahing" and shouting back and forth.

Down they raced, but they stopped at the main highway, because there were more bells jingling, dozens of them and it seemed to Libby-Lou as if all of Points West was out strawriding. On came a bob-sled that raced by, shouting greeting, then another and another. Then one drew up just as the Masons went by, and Dick turned in back of them.

"Hello, Libby-Lou and Ken," Dorothy shouted.

"Hello, hello, hello," they called. The

Millers and Farrahs fell in behind the Stewarts' sled, and then the rest of the party dashed up.

Libby-Lou craned her neck to see how many sleds there were, but she couldn't count. They kept coming and coming and coming.

"There are twenty-two in all," Kenneth told her.

"Oh, isn't it fun?" she laughed.

Away they went over the slippery roads, the snow flying from the horses' hoofs, the runners creaking, and the bells ringing as hard as they could ring, for every team had its harness full of them. Through the timber section, down toward the river, up the way they went to the Reservation, and on, on, on. The horses hardly seemed to feel the loads they carried. They did slacken their pace when they went up a hill, or down, but where it was level, they just raced, and all the time some of the party was calling, shouting, or singing.

Ten miles they went and then, just as the sun was dropping behind the mountains, they reached a level place and the teams were driven four times around a very wide circle, and finally someone blew a horn, and

they all stopped, right where they were. Then Libby-Lou noticed that right in the middle was a huge bonfire, and some people were gathered around it. One of the men had the long horn in his hand. He blew it again, the drivers hopped from their seats, threw blankets over the horses' backs, fastened protectors across their chests, unhitched them, and hitched them to the sides of each sled. Two boys came running with forks full of hay, and dragging a sack of oats, so every pony could have a good supper while waiting.

Of course everybody piled out of the sleds almost as soon as they stopped and hurried to the warm fire. Then two more were made, a dozen mysterious hampers produced, and steaming pots of tea or coffee.

"Arm yourselves," the man shouted and he passed long, slender spears, which were really skewers on sticks.

"We aim to please," another grinned. "Will you have a bacon bat, or a 'dog' and roll feast?"

"Dog and roll," Kenneth answered promptly.

"Help yourself. Bake it yourself, and

fish out a potato from the fire," the man laughed.

Nobody needed urging, they were all hungry after the long ride, so they decided which they would have, speared their portions, and soon there was a circle of cooks about the blazing fire. There seemed to be no end to the number of potatoes among the burning coals, and besides some of the party had brought a great stack of sandwiches. There were pickles, and some of the men had fish they had caught through the ice earlier in the day, and when they were nicely toasted, they were passed around, and how everybody did enjoy them. To be sure they "tapped off" with pie or cake, and by that time most of them were turned with their backs to the fire, because one does get good and warm in front, while in back, one gets almost as cold.

The new fires they built helped keep them comfortable all around, although they had to be careful where they sat down because close to the bonfires, the snow melted a little, but not much.

When the picnic supper was over, they gathered around and sang, then, as it was getting late, they began to talk about going

home. Some of the grown-ups were going on to a big dance at the County Seat, but the families who had children decided they would not do that. So everybody got back into the sleds and while the last man threw snow on the blaze the teams were driven around and around four times again, but then there were more horns, little ones, but they made a big noise just the same.

The folks who were going on to the County Seat called goodbye to the ones who were not, and part of the strawriders went on north, while the rest, including the Masons, and the Stewarts went south.

"Well, how do you like strawriding?" Uncle Fred asked, when they were once more in their own warm home.

"It's just beautiful," Libby-Lou assured him.

"Before you all go to bed, I have something in my mind that I'd like to get off my mind," he said soberly, so they all sat down to listen while he got whatever it was, off his mind.

"It's this way," he began, then stopped. "First, I want to ask a question. How many of my guests do not like Points West and want to hurry right back to New York?" He

waited, looked from one to another, but there wasn't a single answer. Mummy sat very quiet and Daddy looked him square in the eye.

"Ah—er—ahum," he said. "The ayes have it," Kenneth laughed.

"Well, that being the case, I don't mind relieving my mind You see, I love this ranch of mine, so does my wife, only she isn't so absolutely crazy about it as I am. I mean, she would like to see some place else once in a while, and probably somebody else once in a while——"

"Fred, what are you getting at?" Aunt Margaret protested.

He didn't pay any attention to her, but went on. "Margaret likes to travel, and I must agree with her that traveling is widening. I am right, am I not, Professor?"

"You are not," Daddy answered. "It is generally conceded to be *broadening,* but not necessarily widening unless one spends all of one's time eating."

"Well, that isn't what Margaret wants."

"Why, Fred, I——"

He held up his hand. "She's been the best sport, stuck around the ranch three years now, except for short jaunts, which do not

either widen or broaden, so I know it's her turn to have a rattling good time. Now, ever since last summer I've been teaching this Kerwood family to run a ranch, and I'm wondering if it wouldn't be a good idea for me to elope with my wife to the West Indies, or some place like that?"

"It sounds to me like an excellent idea," Daddy said very gravely.

"You do not have to get back to that miserable college until late in the summer, do you?"

"No," Daddy didn't even smile.

"And you would sort of like taking a crack at running a ranch?" Uncle Fred remarked.

"Should indeed."

"With Libby-Lou's help I am sure you can manage. I'll leave Flyer and Garwin with you in case you get stuck," Uncle Fred told them.

"Oh, Uncle Fred, are you and Aunt Margaret going away?" Libby-Lou simply couldn't hold in another minute.

"Didn't you just hear me settle all the details with the professor, your august father?" he demanded with a scowl.

"Oh, Lib-Lou, that means we are going to

stay at Points West all summer," Kenneth shouted.

"Hurray, hurray," Libby-Lou shouted too, Garwin barked and Flyer climbed to the top of the bookcase so he wouldn't get stepped on while they danced and sang about it.

THE END

"I'm doing it," she giggled and took more steps.

The two small girls were on their web snow-shoes and the little boy was bundled up to his laughing eyes.